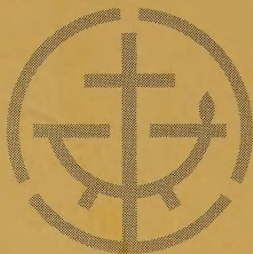


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FROM GLOOM TO GLADNESS:

ILLUSTRATIONS OF LIFE FROM THE BIOGRAPHY OF ESTHER.

"Then was the Queen exceedingly grieved."—ESTHER 4:4.

"The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor."—ESTHER 8:16.

BY
SMITH
REV. JOSEPH S. VAN DYKE, A.M., 1832-1915

AUTHOR OF "POPERY THE FOE OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE REPUBLIC,"

"THROUGH THE PRISON TO THE THRONE," "GIVING OR
ENTERTAINMENT—WHICH ?" ETC.

"Let's learn to live, for we must die."—CRABBE.

"Life's but a means unto an end."—BAILY.

"This life of ours is a wild æolian harp of many a joyous strain,
But under them all there runs a loud perpetual wail, as of souls in pain."

—LONGFELLOW.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE book of Esther forms a unique and charming chapter in the strange and eventful history of the elect nation. Nebuchadnezzar had conquered that people and carried them into exile and distributed them in the regions around Babylon and Shushan. The book before us tells one of the many wonderful stories of their life in the land of their exile.

Seventy years after the overthrow and removal of the nation, a decree of Cyrus the Great permitted them to return from the land where their harps moaned upon the willow-branches, to their old home among the mountains of Judea. Of this decree many availed themselves. All should have returned ; but held by worldly ties, ties of relationship, ties of property, ties of worldly comfort, thousands of them had remained scattered among the heathen, and hence the awful sorrow that at length came upon the whole nation.

Shushan, the scene of the chief events recorded in the book of Esther, was some two hundred miles north of the Persian Gulf, and its site is now covered with huge mounds under which its ruins lie embalmed. Excavations in one of those mounds have disclosed the positions of so many bases of columns, some of the bases yet in place, as to indicate the ground plan of a once imposing and sumptuous edifice. And on certain of these bases legible inscriptions are found, a portion of which is in

these words : " Says Artaxerxes, son of King Darius, son of Artaxerxes, son of Xerxes, son of Darius Hystaspes, Darius my ancestor built this temple (or edifice), and afterward it was repaired by Artaxerxes my grandfather." This building, therefore, was in existence in the time of Esther, and James Ferguson, Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, says : " There seems no reasonable doubt but that it was in front of one of the lateral porticos of this building that Ahasuerus made the feast mentioned in the first chapter of the book of Esther."

Researches in Shushan and vicinity enable us, with some reasonable approach to accuracy, to set this edifice before the eye.

First, there rises a mound of earth fifty feet high and one thousand feet square, walled up on every side. On its northern side, a broad stairway leads from the street to the upper level. About one hundred feet southward from the head of the stairs stands " the king's gate " (Esther 2 : 9) ; a hall one hundred feet square, its roof resting upon an external wall and four massive pillars within. Southward from this hall some two hundred feet stands the royal palace. It consists,

First of a central hall one hundred and forty-five feet square, embracing thirty-six pillars. These pillars are sixty feet high and crowned with capitals elaborately carved. They are fluted, and rest on richly ornamented bases.

Projecting from this hall northward is an imposing portico as wide as the main building, and one hundred feet deep. Its roof is supported by two rows of pillars, each sixty feet high, and resting on bell-shaped bases. On the eastern side of the central hall is a portico just like the northern one, and another like it on the western side.

On the top of the main building rises the *Talar* or

temple, of like dimensions in length and breadth, and fifty feet high.

The grounds around these edifices to the edge of the plateau form "the court of the garden of the king's palace." (Esther 1 : 5.) There, between neat parterres decked with the choicest of the Persian flora, are walks and wider areas of various shapes and dimensions paved with marble, "red and blue and black and white" (Esther 1 : 6) in all manner of cunning devices. Along either side of these paved spaces are marble pillars, and in these pillars silver rings. (Esther 1 : 6.) By fastening to these silver rings with "cords of fine linen and purple" certain "hangings" or awnings of "white, green and blue" the marble pavement is shielded from the direct rays of the sun, and the whole garden converted into a splendid banqueting hall. (Esther 1 : 5, 6.)

Such is the palace that greeted the eye of the citizen of Shushan as he looked up from the street below, and how grand the view that lay before the eye of the monarch as he looked from between the pillars of his porticos or from the top of the lofty *Talar* that crowned the palace ! "Groves of date and lemon trees, surrounded by rich pasture grounds and golden seas of grain, backed by the distant mountains."

The chief actors in the drama of which this palace was the centre are four.

The first of these is the Medo-Persian king, Xerxes the Great, who figured so largely, and for himself so disastrously in Grecian history. He seems to have been not much better, not much worse than the average oriental despot. When nothing crossed his humor he was not ungentle or unkind. But unhappily facts are not wanting to show that he was capable of almost any extreme of atrocity. A specimen of his capabilities in

this style of action is found in his treatment of Pythias the Lydian. On his march toward the Hellespont for the invasion of Greece he halted at Celænæ, a city of Phrygia, and was there entertained by Pythias with incredible magnificence. Pythias even offered to contribute some millions of dollars toward the expenses of the war. The king appeared to be greatly gratified with the deportment and offer of his wealthy subject, but refused to accept the offer. When, however, a little after, Pythias begged, as a favor, that of his five sons in the king's army the eldest might be left with him in his old age, the brutal monarch went into a rage and caused that son to be slain in the presence of his father, the body divided into two parts, and placed the one part on one side of the road and the other on the other, and the whole army marched between them !

On the other hand, Xerxes' whole recorded treatment of Esther is marked with the most considerate delicacy and tenderness.

Another character that confronts us, in this narrative, is that of the Agagite demon Haman. This man was the embodiment of proud, imperious, relentless selfishness. He was not an atheist without a god ; he was not a polytheist with many gods ; but a strict monotheist with just one god, and that god was himself. His one aim was to burn incense upon the altar of that one god, and whoever refused homage to his deity was quickly offered up as a burnt offering to that deity.

In striking contrast with both these is the Jewess, Hadassah the myrtle, Esther the star, a young, beautiful, true-hearted, heroic woman. According to the record she was "fair of form and of good countenance." Nor was hers that inane beauty whose charms vanish on a nearer view, but a beauty that had its seat in a spirit

“finely touched and for fine issues.” Amiable, judicious, faithful, pure, pious through all the glitter of her regal glory she displayed the solid lustre of that uncommon jewel, common-sense. An orphan child of a lone foreigner preferred by the mightiest monarch of his day to be his queen, there is no recorded indication that her head was turned by her elevation, no sign of silly vanity or weak-minded caprice, but a steady propriety of deportment, whether toward her inferiors, superiors or equals. The impurities of a corrupt and voluptuous court found no crevices in her character to lodge in. The higher atmosphere of the palace neither congealed her recollection of kindness bestowed upon her by Mordecai in her days of obscurity, nor chilled her affection for him. And the events connected with the deliverance at Shushan set her before us as a heroine whose courage and force of character will gain rather than lose by comparison with those of any other woman with which history acquaints us.

The fourth of the characters who exert a controlling influence in this strange drama is Mordecai, cousin of the queen.

His was a style of character seldom appreciated at its full value in society—that of a good man. That he was a person of tender, delicate sensibility is evident from his treatment of Esther. Present, as we may suppose, when her last parent died, he at once relieves the parental anxieties as to the fate of the orphan girl amid the possible hardships, the probable temptations and the certain loneliness of exile among heathen, by pledging himself to act the parent toward her; a pledge which he kept, with full fidelity, to the very end. As devout as he was tender-hearted, he maintained his pious integrity amid all the temptations of the most profligate of courts. As reso-

lute as he was devout, neither the example of sycophants around him, nor the frown of a pampered and murderous courtier, nor even the command of a king whose will was law and who ruled from the Indus to Greece and from Scythia to the Persian Gulf, could force him to “crook the pregnant hinges of the knee” to an unworthy object.

Without what men call brilliancy, that often dazzles only to deceive, he not only shows himself equal to any actual task imposed upon him, but impresses us with the conviction that any other and higher task would be executed just as easily and just as well; that there are stores of force within him adequate to any emergency that may befall.

It is through the maze of action and passion on the part of these characters that you are to be led in the following volume. And your attention is specially called, in its pages, to the wonderful affluence and variety of instruction presented in the sacred record. As you pass along you see the clouds gathering in big, black masses over the devoted head of Israel; you hear the rumbling thunders, see the flashing lightnings, and hear the wail of the cowering nation as it awaits the stroke. At length the thunderbolt falls, smiting, however, not the objects of the plot but the plotters themselves. One hour Haman wears the king’s ring as prime-minister of the Empire, and Mordecai is doomed to death upon the gallows erected in the court-yard of Haman’s palace, and the next hour Mordecai wears that ring, and Haman hangs a ghastly corpse upon his own gallows!

Those who have read the author’s excellent work entitled “Through the Prison to the Throne” will know what to expect from the pages now put into their hands.

W. P. BREED.

PHILADELPHIA, March 28, 1883.

PREFACE.

“THERE is no life,” says Carlyle, “but is a heroic poem of its sort.” Certainly, of the lives so faithfully recorded in Scripture, all are worthy of study, truths for the active present being mirrored from the silent past.

This volume, it may be, will add confirmation to the theory that “a well-written life is almost as rare as a well-spent one ;” but if it shall prove even moderately successful in directing attention to those unalterable principles, which, when observed, distil blessings, and when disregarded entail anguish, the author will consider himself richly repaid for the labor expended in its preparation ; indeed, if its defects shall prompt others to glean in the fertile fields of Sacred Biography, his labors will not prove fruitless. The pleasure derived from the effort to extract sweetness from the flowers strewn along the pathway of human existence is itself an ample recompense.

The author’s purpose in this book (as in its predecessor, “Through the Prison to the Throne”) is to deduce lessons of instruction, of encouragement and of comfort for those who are striving to solve for themselves the problem of human life, and who hope that after sunset they may continue to weave, on an endless to-morrow, the garment of character already placed in the loom whose movements cease not when the silver cord is loosed. The warm commendation so generously bestowed upon the

former volume inspires the hope that this may find readers who on examining its contents will “gather the good and cast the bad away.”

THE AUTHOR.

March, 1883.

FROM GLOOM TO GLADNESS.



I.

DISAPPOINTED AMBITION.

“Trust not these seas again,
Though smooth and fair :
Trust not these waves again,
Shipwreck is there.

“Trust not these hopes again,
Sunny and fair :
Trust not that smile again,
Peril is there.”

HORATIUS BONAR.

To determine with certainty who is the author of this interesting story is apparently impossible. It may have been Mordecai, who evidently possessed the requisite knowledge and who, as we are informed (Chap. 9 : 5-10), prepared a narrative which was sent to all the Jews in all the provinces of the king, Ahasuerus, with the design of inaugurating the feast of Purim. Perhaps we are justified in inferring that this was the account we now possess ; or at least that Mordecai was the author of the book bearing the name of Esther.

It is a little remarkable that the name of God does not occur in the entire book. Was it with the design of rendering it more acceptable to heathen readers ? or was it

because its author had become, by long residence in Persia, comparatively indifferent to the religion of his fathers? If Mordecai was the sacred penman, possibly he prepared it after becoming prime-minister, as a part of "The Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia;" and that he designedly omitted the name of Jehovah, lest he might be charged with endeavoring to propagate his own religious beliefs among a people who, though willing to accord liberty of conscience to all, were disposed to repel efforts at proselytism. As has been well said, however, "Though the name of God does not occur in it, the finger of God does, directing many minute events for the bringing about of his people's deliverance." "The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming."

In the Latin Vulgate, as used in the Papal Church, there is an addition of nearly seven chapters to that which is accepted as canonical. In this apocryphal portion there is not only a marked difference in style, which is decidedly inferior to that of the genuine part, but there are evident contradictions—Mordecai being represented as a great man prior to his discovery of the conspiracy against the king, even prior to the divorce of Vashti; and Haman being called a Macedonian. Moreover, in strong contrast with the Hebrew portion of the book, and apparently with the design of supplying a defect, the name of God occurs frequently, the first verse beginning, "Then Mordecai said, God has done these things." These reasons, and others which might be adduced, warrant us, in the absence of proof for the authenticity of the chapters in question, in rejecting them as spurious, accepting only those received by the Jews, and found in the Hebrew text.

Of the eight Medo-Persian kings, who held successive dominion from 634 to 495 B. C., five, it has been maintained, bear in Scripture the name of Ahasuerus—Cyxares, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes Longimanus. Who then was on the throne in Esther's time? The question has elicited much discussion, and great divergence of opinion.

From the extent assigned to the empire—"from India even to Ethiopia"—it is conceded that the domestic incidents recorded in this book could not have occurred earlier than the reign of Darius. As every possible theory has had its advocates, we perhaps need not marvel that some—Archbishop Usher, Charles Rollin and others—have adjudged Darius Hystaspes the monarch who married the beautiful Jewess. Unfortunately, however, not only does his character differ very widely from that of him whose follies are here recorded, but his wives were daughters of King Cyrus.

Dr. Prideaux, sustained by the authority of Josephus,—expresses the opinion that Artaxerxes Longimanus is the emperor referred to; and in the apocryphal additions to the book, as also in the Septuagint translation of the canonical portion, the name of Artaxerxes, in every instance, displaces that of Ahasuerus. There is, however, no correspondence between his character, as portrayed by profane historians, and that of the powerful monarch, headstrong, foolish, licentious, who espoused Mordecai's cousin. Moreover, as in the seventh year of his reign he issued a decree favorable to the Jews, it seems to the last degree improbable that in the twelfth he could have been as ignorant of them as the record seems to imply; much more improbable that Haman could have succeeded so easily in procuring a sentence of indiscriminate massacre against them.

Accordingly, the theory of Joseph Scaliger is now the generally accepted opinion, that the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther is Xerxes, whose character, as delineated in history, bears a very close resemblance to that of him who "feasted a hundred and fourscore days" with the nobles and princes of his provinces; who while heated with wine rashly determined to divorce Vashti because she declined to degrade her sex, and womanly dignity as well, by presenting herself amid drunken revellers that her beauty might inflame pride and become the subject of fulsome flattery; who deliberately decreed the destruction of his Jewish subjects either with the design of gratifying the resentment of a base minion or in the hope of replenishing his exhausted treasury.

This theory is also strongly confirmed by chronological facts. In the third year of Xerxes' reign an assembly was held to devise measures for rebuking the insolence of the Athenians, who had reduced Sardis to ashes; the monarch sought to induce the nobility to avenge the disgrace which the nation had received at the battle of Marathon, and to inaugurate a war upon which Darius, prior to his death, had resolutely determined. A fruitful event. Perhaps there is reference to this same assembly in the scriptural assertion that during the third year of Ahasuerus' reign "the power of Persia and Media" was before him witnessing "the riches of the glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty." In the seventh year of his dominion, Xerxes returned from Greece greatly humbled—his army of three millions having been ingloriously defeated—and consoled himself by surrendering to sensual pleasures. It certainly looks as if the book of Esther was referring to the same monarch when it informs us that Ahasuerus, in the seventh year of his rule, sought "fair maidens" and

spent his time in perfecting the voluptuous arrangements of an eastern seraglio. Once more, Xerxes reigned twenty years ; Ahasuerus about the same length of time.

We therefore accept the prevalent opinion that Ahasuerus is Xerxes, without troubling ourselves with the lengthy discussions of the learned, and proceed upon this assumption, contenting ourselves with a conjecture which has a preponderance of probabilities in its favor.

Having successfully refuted the claims of his brother, Artabazanes, and having made good his right to the succession, Xerxes, on the death of his father, quietly entered upon the government of the most extensive and powerful kingdom of the world, that of Darius Hystaspes. Prompted by insatiable ambition he immediately enters upon preparations for the subjugation of Egypt. These being completed, in the second year he marched against the Egyptians, subdued them, imposed heavy burdens, and transferring the government of the conquered provinces to his brother, returned to Susa swelling with pride. Success has intoxicated him. Ambition, the empty but glittering bubble, has rendered him miserable in the midst of princely abundance. Present acquisitions, though amply sufficient, fail in satisfying him. A hundred and twenty-seven provinces—lands his eye has never seen, people his kindness has never benefited—is a dominion far too circumscribed. His heart is fired with an unquenchable desire for more.

Who can set bounds to human ambition ? With more wealth than he can find time to compute, and with more subjects than he can hope to enumerate, Ahasuerus is disquieted as long as he hears of riches flowing into other coffers, and lands yet unconquered. The entire earth will scarcely satisfy his boundless ambition ; soon a silent

grave will be his only possession. The heart's infinite desires God alone can fill.

For the accomplishment of new projects, devised by reckless ambition, the sovereign summons to the palace the princes and nobles from all the provinces. For six months they feast and revel, plan and consult. Shall they declare war against Greece? The king is exceedingly eager—in fact has openly avowed his purpose. Mardonius, concealing his designs under the cloak of loyalty, is extolling Xerxes above all the kings of the past, and in the usual language of court flattery is declaring how necessary it is to avenge the dishonor done to the Persian name. Burning with desire to obtain command of an immense army, he represents the Grecians as a people without courage, without soldiers, and without military experience; as cowards who will not dare to face the Persians, the bravest and most invincible warriors in the world.

Many, perceiving that this speech greatly pleased the monarch, either indorsed it or maintained silence, hoping for honors in a war which their calmer judgment must have deemed likely to end in national disaster; but Artabanes, the king's uncle, a prince renowned for wisdom, dared to throw the weight of his entire influence against a project so hazardous. He reminds the monarch that the gods, who alone are great, are enemies of pride and take pleasure in humbling everything that exalts itself; that the loftiest trees have the most reason to dread the lightning; that it is folly to be dazzled with imaginary glory.

The fearless speech ended, Xerxes gives vent to his rage by insulting his best friend, the only person who had the courage to give prudent counsel; and by the impetuosity of his temper carries the assembly with him.

The nobles and princes are so far imbued with the spirit of their sovereign that they decree war against the neighboring state, beauteous Greece.

The heart of the king leaps with joy. The nation is committed to a war of conquest. Wives may be clad in garments of widowhood ; mothers may be rendered childless, and daughters fatherless ; fields may be devastated and cities sacked ; wailing and anguish may fill the land—what cares he if wealth only flows into his treasury, if the tide of human blood but bears his name to other lands and coming centuries. Dipping his pen in the life-blood of Persia's noblest, he will write for himself a record on fame's glittering temple.

Even this long feast, like all things earthly, came to an end. Happy, thrice happy, they who shall eat bread at an unending feast, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Persia's throne has perished. Its palace, with its curtains of white, green and blue, with its beds sparkling with silver, its pillars of marble, its pavements of curiously checkered porphyry, its goblets of gold set with diamonds—all has crumbled. Princes and nobles, maidens and warriors, servants and masters, sleep the sleep which knows no waking till the Archangel's trump shall sound. Buried in forgetfulness are they all ; their hopes and their fears, their hatreds and their loves, their wealth and their poverty—all have ended. Their titles are unknown, their names unrecorded. Even the most powerful city of the empire, proud, wealthy, ancient Babylon, touched by time's finger, has passed away, leaving only ruins to mark the site of its greatness.

The feast for the nobles and the princes being ended, and the last delegation from the provinces dismissed, the joyous exultation of the king found expression in a banquet given to “all the people in Shushan the palace, both

great and small, seven days." In this feast, as in that which preceded it, some no doubt were entertained on one day, some on another, and because the number was large, the entertainment was given "in the court of the garden of the king's palace," a tent being erected for this purpose, supported, as Josephus informs us, "by pillars of gold and silver with curtains of linen and purple spread over them, that it might afford room for many ten thousands to sit down." The dining couches were also of gold and silver upon a pavement of marble, red, white, blue, and black. The drinking vessels were of gold adorned with precious stones.

There was one regulation at this banquet which certainly reflects credit upon the host—"the drinking was according to law, none did compel." The costliest beverages were no doubt provided in abundance, but the custom which has become too frequent in subsequent ages of enlisting friendship in the service of drunkenness, and urging persons to drink against their settled judgment, and even in violation of pledges given, was discountenanced by this monarch, who, while manifesting his generosity, showed his appreciation of the principle of individual liberty by enacting that there should be no undue urging. Consequently, if any one drank to excess, which was quite likely, though rendered less probable by this wise provision, the fault was entirely his own. The practice of treating and of drinking healths seems to have been prohibited by law. Is it not strange that in this respect modern society should contrast unfavorably with heathen ideas of propriety? that a custom so tyrannical in its nature, and so injurious in its effects, should still prevail? While we turn in loathing from a life which this age would justly denominate impure, let us have the candor to acknowledge that there

is one respect in which ancient Persia may have been in a condition to administer reproof to an age which vauntingly proclaims itself the most moral of any the world has ever witnessed. Indeed, may we not fear that if vainglory blinded Shushan's king to the follies of his age, it is possible that pride may prompt us to engage in condemnation of less favored periods, while quite oblivious to the moral condition of the society in which we live? Prevalent sins have a tendency to blunt the conscience.

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen ;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

ALEXANDER POPE.

It was during this period that “Vashti made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to King Ahasuerus.”

On the last day of the feast, the king, merry with wine, sends for the queen. With womanly dignity she declines to present herself amid the revels of her drunken husband, preferring to brave his anger rather than become the object of his lascivious flattery. Rare courage ! The decision parted them for life, converting a husband's love into hatred. Calmness might have enabled him to perceive that his own honor as well as hers was preserved by her dignified refusal. Was she able in the seclusion of her private life to solace herself with the reflection that she had acted wisely in declining to make an ostentatious display of her charms before eyes inflamed to passion by excess of wine ? She obeyed the unwritten law of that age, indeed of every age—the law which enjoins modesty under all circumstances, and upon all

classes, especially upon notable personages when under the public gaze. She had her reward, the consciousness of having maintained the true dignity of woman.

Under the implied rebuke, the arrogant spirit of Ahasuerus chafes exceedingly. "I, the sovereign of a hundred and twenty seven provinces, of nobles and princes, of people innumerable, cannot control one woman! The partner of my honors, who owes everything to my favor, presumes to exalt her will above mine!"

With the concurrence of the nobility, the king determines to divorce her, publishing the decree throughout the entire empire, and writing it among the irreversible decrees of the realm. The approval of a multitude, how often may it be interpreted as only the reflex of one overpowering will, or as an offering to the vanity of one who has it in his power to confer substantial benefits! A king, especially, will often find flatterers, who are ready to defend his opinions with plausible arguments, while those who are disposed to give wise counsel are deterred by personal considerations from opposing what they know he ardently desires. So potent is selfishness in conquering courage that a wise prince, and indeed every one who occupies a position of influence, does well carefully to conceal his own sentiments if he is sincerely desirous of procuring the opinions of others. Of courtiers, very few have sufficient manliness to announce their own convictions. There is an almost irresistible temptation to weigh every word by the effect it is likely to have upon future promotion.

Nor was it difficult for the nobles to discover specious reasons by which to defend their concurrence in the reckless policy of the king. Alarm for the consequences to all husbands, horror at the insult offered to the monarch, the wound given to their own pride in the queen's re-

fusal to exhibit her charms for their gratification---these were reasons amply sufficient, in their judgment, to justify immediate divorce. Alas, how frequently it happens that laws steeped in selfishness, even in the unreasonable whims of their authors, perhaps in ambitious schemes, are inflicted upon the public !

Josephus affirms that the king, having a strong affection for Vashti, would not have divorced her if in conformity with law he could have forgiven her. If this was the case, the advice given may have been prompted by regard to justice and the fear that all wives, especially those of the nobility, might become disobedient. It is more than doubtful, however, whether any law could have successfully opposed the will of Ahasuerus.

If the king has not prudence sufficient to pause ere he incurs the consequences of an indiscreet decision, he shall have time enough, an entire life, for unavailing regrets. He who prides himself on never reversing his judgments should be extremely cautious about forming them.

Obstinacy may refuse to change its opinions ; wisdom will be guilty of no such rashness. Even Xerxes, on one occasion at least, was forced to confess his faults, owning that in the heat of passion he had spoken too slightly of the counsel of Artabanes. In this he exhibited manliness, perhaps because he had a manly spirit to contend with ; in that he manifested cruel obstinacy, possibly because he was dealing with one upon whose rights he believed he might trample with impunity. Some natures are slow to respect any rights except those they dare not invade ; are regardless of the feelings of any except of those they fear.

Vashti is in seclusion. Ahasuerus is at the head of an immense army, numbering three millions, besides camp followers, five millions in all ; the largest army ever assem-

bled. Evidently, Daniel's prediction is fulfilled : " He has, through his great power and his great riches, stirred up all the nations of the known world against the realm of Greece."

Arriving in the territory now known as Turkey in Europe, Xerxes made an exhibition of his measureless folly. He ordered a passage to be cut for his ships through Mount Athos, a lofty range on the isthmus connecting the Macedonian peninsula with the mainland. He hoped thereby to avoid the tempestuous sea which had occasioned many shipwrecks. To the mountain he exclaimed : " Athos, I advise thee not to be so audacious as to put rocks and stones which cannot be cut in the way of my workmen. If thou givest them that opposition, I shall cut thee entirely down and throw thee headlong into the sea." Having delivered his vain boast that nature herself must obey his commands, he commenced the herculean task, ordering that the workmen should be whipped if the work proceeded too tardily.

After wintering in Sardis, he inaugurated the spring campaign by a review of his immense army. Seating himself upon a lofty throne of white marble, erected for the purpose, he rapidly runs his eye over the waters of the Hellespont which were white with the sails of his powerful navy, consisting of ten thousand ships. He gazes eagerly along the coast of Abydos which was filled with his land-forces—swarming with millions. " I hold myself happy," he exclaimed, and burst into tears. His uncle, Artabanes, astonished at his conduct, asked, " O king, why this sudden change in your feelings ?" " Why not weep ?" said Xerxes ; " consider the extreme brevity of human life. In less than a century all these will have passed away." Tens of thousands of throbbing hearts were then ready to brave dangers. Millions of

strong hands were grasping weapons of war. Thousands of active intellects were devising the road to victory. In a few years, much sooner than he anticipated, their pomp and their power would be gone. Their bravery would simply purchase dishonored graves in an unknown land.

Artabanus offered, as seems probable, a better solution of his monarch's grief: "The calamities that fall upon us, and the maladies that shake our frames, make life, short though it be, to appear long; death therefore becomes the most desirable refuge for man." Alas! it is true, cares and sorrows fill life's bitter cup. Anxiety and disappointment wear away the wearied life.

Forward to victory! But a strait nearly a mile wide separates them from beautiful Greece. "Engineers, construct a bridge," shouts Xerxes. In an incredibly brief period of time the structure stands complete; lo, a sudden storm sweeps it away in a few hours. The monarch thereupon orders a chain to be thrown into the sea, as if designing henceforth to chain its angry waves. Then scourging its waters with whips, he exclaims, "Troublesome element, thus does thy master chastise thee for having affronted him without reason. Know that Xerxes shall pass over thy waters in spite of thy billows."

Decreeing death against the workmen who built the bridge, he ordered the construction of a second, over which, when completed, he crossed with his immense army. Fatal passage! Overwhelming disaster awaits him.

He is nearing Thermopylæ, a narrow pass in the mountains. To his great surprise, he finds three hundred Spartans, under command of Leonidas, prepared to give him battle and resolved to die that day and sleep that night with Pluto. Struggling to defend their homes, their wives, their country, and their liberty, they fight

with the courage of desperation. The evening finds the only survivor occupying the pass and defying the entire Persian army, of whom twenty thousand lie dead on the field. Best of all for unhappy Greece, their matchless heroism shall arouse the enthusiasm of the entire nation. Her sons have shown themselves ready to sacrifice life for freedom. It has been proved that numbers do not ensure victory. Greece may still hope. Hordes, as numberless as locusts from the desert, cannot overwhelm the few brave soldiers whom the States can muster into service. "Our enemies have come but to enrich the soil with their blood."

The Persian army, still powerful, is marching through the heart of the country, devastating everything. Athens is deserted. It looks as if the entire nation were prostrate at the conqueror's feet. The decisive battle, however, is not yet fought. The Grecian States are massing their forces at Salamis, determined to make at least one desperate struggle, and die, if they must, defending their liberties. The day that is to determine their destiny has come. Their navy, consisting of three hundred and eighty ships, proudly rides the waters of the narrow strait. Xerxes is seated on a throne erected on an eminence to afford him an opportunity of witnessing every movement, whether on land or sea. That day Persia's ten thousand ships were shattered, captured, or put to flight.

"Hopes perished that had hung as wreaths
Around youth's buoyant brow,
And joys, like withered autumn leaves,
Dropped from the shaken bough."

Perceiving that he was hopelessly defeated, and fearing that the enemy might destroy the bridge, and so cut off

his flight, the monarch, deserting his army, hastens forward with a small retinue, to escape if possible from a country which he hoped to conquer without a battle.

He, whom millions owned as commander and admired for bravery, whose military schemes tens of thousands praised and were ready to sacrifice life itself to carry out, is skulking across the Hellespont at night, is proceeding by forced marches back to Susa, his flight heralding the dishonor which his vanity has brought upon Persia's name. How often have ardent ambitions and well-laid schemes ended in irretrievable disaster !

“How like a mountain devil in the heart
Rules the unreined ambition ! Let it once
But play the monarch, and its haughty brow
Glow with a beauty that bewilders thought
And unthrones peace forever. Putting on
The very pomp of Lucifer, it turns
The heart to ashes, and with a spring
Left in the bosom for the spirit's lip,
We look upon our splendor and forget
The thirst for which we perish.”

“What is ambition ? 'Tis a glorious cheat !
It hath no features. In its face is set
A mirror, and the gazer sees his own.
It looks a god, but it is like himself :
It hath a mien majestical, and smiles
Bewilderingly sweet—but how like him !
And what is its reward ? At best a name !
Praise—when the ear has grown too dull to hear ;
Gold—when the senses it should please are dead ;
Wreaths—when the hair they cover has grown gray ;
Fame—when the heart it should have thrilled is numb ;
All things but love when love is all we want ;
And close behind comes Death, and ere we know
He sends us, stripped and naked, to the tomb.”

With energies impaired by over-exertion, with a spirit humbled by misfortune and a treasury depleted by an unsuccessful war, Ahasuerus enters the palace another if not a better man. His desire for military glory is completely eradicated; sensual desires have taken its place. The waters of a river if restrained by barriers from flowing in their natural channel, are certain to make for themselves a passage elsewhere; so the impulses of a passionate nature, if repressed in one direction, are likely to burst through all obstacles and flow with equal, or even greater violence, in new courses. If Persia's monarch cannot conquer Grecian heroism on the field of battle, he can "lead silly women captive." If he may not be ambitious, he can be licentious. If he cannot drive his chariot over the forms of conquered foes, he can give loosened reins to sensuality, dashing headlong into abysses of iniquity and attaining the notoriety of being the most profligate of the profligate. Apparently, he is resolved on being foremost somewhere, even though it may be in wickedness.

No other as yet occupies Vashti's place. Though the wrath of the king has subsided sufficiently to permit him to recall the memory of the queen, his arrogant temper and violent spirit prevent him from restoring her to favor. Four years have passed; his will has not relented. Though the vehemence of his indignation may have so far subsided that affection for Vashti may have partially revived, pride of character and an irreversible law stand in the way of his recognizing her as wife. It was, perhaps, with the hope of inducing him to forget her that his advisers determined to employ this agency, "the expulsive power of a new affection." Fair young maidens are chosen, that from the number one may be selected to succeed the discarded queen. In the number of

virgins brought to the palace and placed under the custody of Hege, the king's chamberlain, was Esther, the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai. Upon her head the king sets the royal crown and makes her queen. Strange turn in fortune's wheel—a Jewess, one of that despised nation which Nebuchadnezzar conquered and carried away into captivity, has captivated the heart of Persia's monarch.

Disappointment, especially when it comes in its more bitter forms quenching the ambitions of life, has a tendency to drive the forces of nature in upon herself, causing her to discover inward sources of comfort and rendering the endearments of home doubly more precious. When cherished schemes are blasted, mildew tarnishing their brilliancy ; when hopes once inspiring are turned to ashes under the fires of opposition ; when the friendships from which we anticipated advantages are slowly transforming themselves into hatred ; when intercourse with the world has taught us how unreliable, ungrateful and cruel human nature is ; when we have gone forth with hearts swelling with interest in our fellow-men only to find selfishness pouring its streams upon us—then it is that we return to the hallowed privacy of home, to find our joy in attachments which time has strengthened, and the hollowness of the world has taught us to prize as substantial comforts, more enduring than fame and more ennobling than success. Self-reliance, a sense of divine favor and home, he who has these is rich indeed. Home, the place on earth best fitted to produce self-respect, manly reliance upon one's own exertions, and that genuineness in religion which secures divine approbation ; home, where the heart can find rest and the harassed spirit can discover joy, drinking pleasure from streams whose refreshing waters issue from hidden springs ; home, where

the disheartened find inspiration, love smoothing the asperities of life and strewing its pathway with garlands, leaving it fragrant with the incense of hope ; home, in whose bowers the toils of the day are forgotten, its perplexities, its sorrows and its disappointments are remembered only as contrasts which augment present enjoyment ; home, whose walls shut out enmity, bickering, misrepresentation and the myriad forms of malice, of envy and of evil that on the sea of life incessantly chase each other, wave heaving on wave ; home, the centre of the heart's affections, is earth's purest type of heaven's unalloyed happiness.

“ The fire burns brightest on one's own hearth.”

“ He who is far from home is near to harm.”

“ East, west, home is best.”

“ He who is everywhere is nowhere.”

From the tinselled splendor of the Persian court, it may be well for us to turn that we may contemplate, for a few moments, the majesty of Him who is the true King of kings and Lord of lords ; of Him whom Isaiah represents as “ sitting upon the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them as a tent to dwell in.” To acquire adequate conceptions of his majestic greatness is an impossibility. Great is the majesty which doth hedge a king. That which surrounded Ahasuerus was no doubt such as to inspire awe ; and if we conceive of a ruler capable of holding beneath his will the destinies of the entire earth, we picture to ourselves a throne the approaches to which are through awe-inspiring symbols of greatness, while majesty sits enthroned upon the brow whose frown may be death and whose smile is prosperity. And were it possible

that a human potentate should hold sway over the several planets constituting the solar system—ruling subjects innumerable by his uncontrolled will—what majesty in the eyes of millions would centre around his person and government ! He, however, into whose majestic presence we shall one day enter, and at whose footstool we ought now to bow in reverence, is the Ruler, not alone of earth, nor simply of the solar system, but He whose government is coextensive with the universe, whose presence fills immensity, whose sceptre when lifted in mercy bestows life, when raised in anger consigns to wretchedness.

The inconceivable majesty of God ought to impress us with a becoming sense of our own insignificance. What is man that God should be mindful of him ? a being whose thoughts are inanities, whose purposes are as changeful as the ripples on the moving wave, whose faculties are confined within narrow limits, and feeble even there, whose foundations are in the dust. You have stood, perhaps, beside the ocean, as wave after wave broke upon the beach. As each perished at your feet you lifted your eyes to contemplate that mysterious ocean, which all unconcerned rolled in billow after billow to perish as those that went before. How fitting an emblem of that God whose majestic greatness remains unperturbed as the successive waves of humanity break upon the shore of eternity ! Individuals perish, families become extinct, nations are engulfed in ruin, generations disappear ; the universe, however, moves on as before, scarcely seeming to note the sigh of broken hearts, apparently not feeling the shock of crushed hopes.

A proper conception of the majesty of God is fitted to induce the inquiry, “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to

do?" It should prompt the desire for some humble part in enhancing God's glory, the inclination to do something toward accomplishing the work he is carrying forward in the earth and is willing to effect in our own hearts.

He whose ambition it is to conquer the kingdom of evil within himself and who accepts Christ as the Captain of his salvation is destined to no such disappointment as crushed the spirit of Xerxes, forcing him to feed upon the ashes of crushed hopes and to surrender to self-indulgence that he might drown the memory of former anguish.

II.

HAUGHTINESS AND CRUELTY.

“Fear to do base, unworthy things is valor :
If they be done to us, to suffer them
Is valor too.”

BEN JONSON.

“I have seen the objects of a flatterer mirrored clearly on the
surface,
Where self-love scattered praise to gather praise again.
This is a commodity of merchandise, words put out at interest ;
A scheme for canvassing opinions, and tingeing them all with
partiality.”

M. F. TUPPER.

THE narrative discloses a new character, Haman, the Haughty. He is destined to rise by one bound to lofty station and to drop as suddenly into a dishonored grave.

In the drops of water leaping down the rapids of Niagara what helplessness ! Impelled by irresistible, though invisible, forces, some flow to the right, others to the left. Mounting the billows, gliding into the eddies, sporting in the cove, sparkling on the wave, each is hastening to the fatal plunge. The way of each ends in the way of all.

A striking emblem this of human existence ! Each individual how powerless ! The unseen currents that are bearing him onward how apparently resistless ! One may be seen calmly reposing in the sunshine of prosperity, another weariedly treading the valley of adversity ; one is driven in one direction, another in the opposite. All

are borne, unconsciously it may be, toward the abysses of eternity.

To indulge such reflections may appear strange, but it cannot be unnecessary to remind ourselves that at the beginning of a voyage is the proper time to consider where it is likely to terminate. When entering upon courses which are fitted to end in disaster, or when adopting principles which are likely to impel to temporal ruin and to render death an executioner of divine vengeance, is an opportune time for thoughtful consideration. No better opportunity will ever be afforded to inaugurate a course of conduct which the testimony of experience justifies us in considering well fitted to lead to permanent success here, and to furnish a satisfactory passport to the joys of the unveiled future. Haman is no more, but the lessons of his life are a valuable legacy to those who are sufficiently thoughtful to derive benefits therefrom.

Though every earthly career ends in the grave, there is nevertheless, in the interval between the cradle and the tomb, a wide diversity in the fortunes of men. Some rise to honor ; others sink into disgrace. Upon some is poured the full horn of plenty ; others eat the bread of poverty. One's life, it may be, is a conspicuous failure ; another's an unobserved success. Now littleness may be seen clothed in purple and riding upon the high places of the earth ; anon, greatness may be discovered clad in home-spun and pining in obscurity. To regard wealth, popularity, ease or honor as a measure of success is as unreasonable as it would be to look upon prosperity as an unfailing source of happiness. To deserve success is better than to secure it at the sacrifice of principle—indeed, is the next best thing to its procurement. To meet failure with unperturbed spirit is an honor second only to that of having escaped it. It were folly to deny

that few lives are entirely successful, or to affirm that success neither measures merit nor aids in imparting happiness, still there is more success than is apparent, more merit than secures recognition, and more happiness than can be weighed in the scales of worldly prosperity. Because joy is not an invariable concomitant of success it does not follow that failure can fill the soul with pleasure. Though the despondent and the unsuccessful may derive inspiration from anticipating future joy where goodness will be the sole standard of measurement, we are not forced to conclude that heaven is reserved for those who have made this life a failure. Esther does not inherit woe, here or hereafter, because she dwelt in Shushan's palace ; nor does Haman pass to eternal bliss because his career on earth was a conspicuous failure. Ahasuerus is not happy forever, not even during life, because he occupies a throne ; nor Mordecai endlessly miserable, not even temporarily so, in consequence of his humble station at the king's gate.

Of the qualities that embitter life, rendering it a present anguish and a future hopelessness, few are more destructive of peace than haughtiness, whose effects are as disastrous as they are unavoidable.

Haman, the Magnificent, as his name imports, was advanced by his monarch above all the princes. To him the king's servants bowed ; him all revered except Mordecai. His smile was a passport to favor, his frown a precursor of coming trouble. His vanity justifies us in concluding that he derived unusual satisfaction from the honors heaped upon him ; that he was incapable of perceiving that the respect shown to the office he held was not admiration of the character he possessed. Consequently, littleness is swelling with pride, unmerited honors are filling emptiness with presumption.

In his cup of flattery there is one drop of bitterness, enough to mar all its sweetness. Mordecai, the despised Jew, "bows not, nor does him reverence." Motives of self-interest, the command of the king, regard to personal safety, the sneers of enemies and the solicitations of friends—all are of no avail ; Mordecai will not bow. Haman is enraged.

The benefits we enjoy, though as rich as they are abundant, are frequently forgotten, the trifling advantages we covet and the fancied wrongs we suffer tending to obscure the priceless blessings which Heaven has bestowed. Alas ! the eagerness with which we desire to increase our acquisitions tends to close the heart against the ingress of joys which the substantial benefits already possessed are fitted to impart. What to Haman is the adulation of Shushan's thousands as long as one Jew refuses to do him honor ? Others, the great and the powerful, may reverently bow the knee ; if Mordecai declines, the prime-minister is wretched. His pride chafes under the slight. His eye flashes with rage. Haughtiness tempts him to turn in scorn from honors received, and to pine over a trifling insult, the existence of which only littleness prompted him to notice.

Sudden exaltation, especially when it comes to a mean nature, not infrequently produces haughtiness, and even cruelty. Consequently, Haman, hating whom he cannot control, and despising the independence of spirit which he is incapable of appreciating, secretly vows vengeance. If Mordecai will not bow with the multitude, he shall suffer with the few ; nay, since he belongs to that detested race, the Jews, his studied attempt to mar the completeness of an empty triumph shall cause the extinction of a people whose honorable record runs backward through twenty centuries. Hundreds who

know not the name of the offender, much less his crime, shall suffer for his fidelity to personal convictions. All may perish—one may not refuse to honor inflated emptiness.

“He thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone.” To take vengeance on a nation which for ages had been the object of implacable hatred, comports well with Haman’s conceptions of greatness. Although the Jews have already suffered much—are smitten and peeled—they may furnish him, as he apprehends, an easy opportunity of displaying power and striking terror into the hearts of those who may be inclined to diminish his authority or to resist his arbitrary will. Jehovah’s hand, unseen of Haman, is touching springs of action which shall eventually exalt the Jewish nation and overwhelm their enemies.

His designs are formed. They are yet to receive the sanction of his superstitious religion. “From day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month,” the lot is cast, to ascertain a propitious day for the undertaking. The names of the months being cast into the urn, the twelfth is designated. By the same process the day is selected, Adar 13th, nearly a year hence. Fortunate for the Jews, it afforded them the opportunity of thwarting the schemes of their designing enemies.

His purpose formed and the date of its execution fixed, Haman next attempts to procure an edict from the monarch without revealing his designs. These must be concealed under the cloak of interest in the welfare of the kingdom.

His completion of the arrangements before seeking to obtain the consent of the king evinces confidence in his ability to control the royal will. He employs argument and personal influence, nay, even the motive of avarice.

“There is,” he affirms, “a certain people scattered abroad among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king’s laws ; therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them.” “A certain people”—are they without origin, without a history, and unworthy a name? Does malice need to employ contempt in order to secure its ends? “Scattered”—is their misfortune a fault? One would suppose this rendered them comparatively powerless in resisting lawful authority. Must they be destroyed because dispersed among all people? Is this—itself a result of persecutions long endured—a sufficient reason why they should be exterminated? No ; but Haman adds, “Their laws are diverse from all people.” Is this a crime? If so, Persia’s guilt is deep, and the Christian brotherhood, which has laws of heaven for life on earth, deserves not honor but annihilation.

The Rev. Frederick Robertson has well said, “Whenever there is a great soul pouring out its utterances to the world there will be a Calvary ;” and we may safely affirm that wherever revealed religion is actively at work the world will be pouring upon it hot streams of slander, steeped in malice. Far therefore from marvelling that Haman’s indictment against the Jews contains this assertion, “They keep not the king’s laws,” we wonder that the misrepresentation is no more aggravated. It even contained a shadow of truth. For though the Jewish religion enjoined obedience to earthly sovereigns, securing loyalty from principle, not from mere policy, Mordecai, moved by convictions of duty and sustained by faith, refused to bow, violating one mandate, it is true. But are there no laws, O Haman, except those which enjoin reverence for thee? Do millions of sub-

jects exist merely to do you honor? Must an edict be promulgated against all the Jews in order to afford you an opportunity of striking down one whom you contemn? You answer, "It is not for the king's profit to suffer them. . . . Let it be written that they may be destroyed : and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver . . . to bring it into the king's treasury." Is it for the monarch's profit to drench the land in blood? Are millions of industrious subjects valueless? Do they not help to increase the national wealth? If they do not, how can you afford to pay a large sum into the public treasury for their extinction and the confiscation of their property? Your proposition contains a virtual refutation of the assertion which precedes it, unless we are to understand that you deem revenge, purchased at such a price, a full compensation for sacrifices which avarice rarely makes. If vengeance is your motive, you are a monster ; if it is not, your proposition is a virtual confession of deliberate falsehood, for your plan is so devised as to make them bear the expense of their own extinction and fill your coffers beside.

The confidence with which Haman counts on securing the royal indorsement to his bloody scheme is an incidental proof of a fact well attested in history, that arbitrary monarchs are quite as readily controlled as those whose powers are limited by constitutional barriers ; indeed, as a rule the absolute sovereign, being unrestricted by considerations arising from the welfare of the nation, is in the hands of designing courtiers who by carefully studying his weaknesses become proficient in carrying out their own selfish ends, however base they may be. By appealing to the monarch's fears, by adroit flattery, by aiding in the furtherance of royal projects, by adding fuel to the flames of ambition, by direct ap-

peals to avarice—sometimes by rendering assistance in the accomplishment of lustful intrigues—the powers behind the throne acquire ascendancy over one whose will is law and beneath whose frown thousands slink away into subserviency. The one will which controls the nation is itself controlled—perhaps by a few unprincipled sycophants.

Haman's request, it cannot be denied, was presented with considerable shrewdness. His representation contained sufficient truth to render it plausible and to secure for it the indorsement of a prince whose insolence and arrogance were barriers to his securing an accurate knowledge of facts. Slanders are comparatively harmless; partial truths are dangerous. The assertion, "Their laws are diverse from the laws of the realm," contains enough truth to render it acceptable to Ahasuerus, and sufficient falsehood, at least in insinuation, to render it injurious. The Jews had, it is true, opinions and beliefs of their own, convictions differing from those dominant in Persia—without these they would have been unworthy of respect; but so long as these do not lead to acts of disloyalty it were surely madness for a great prince to be so jealous of free thought as to seek its extinction in rivers of blood. Does he prefer that his subjects should cease to reason? Does he imagine that he can compel his citizens to adopt his views on all questions, social, political, moral and religious? If he is worthy of ruling subjects who possess sterling qualities—those adapted to render a nation truly great—he is able to appreciate, and is ready to encourage, independence of thought—assuredly he will not condemn it.

Alas! lofty station is not a title-deed to the possession of common-sense. LL.D.'s, like M.A.'s and A.B.'s, may be entirely ignorant of those forms of truth which enrich

the soul and sweeten human existence. Arbitrary authority is no evidence that reason reigns. There may be sound judgment, even manliness and independence, in the humblest peasant ; there may be subserviency and folly in the most exalted prince.

As might have been anticipated, Haman succeeds. Some one has said, "Quarry the granite rocks with a razor, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk, then may you hope with such a delicate instrument as reason furnishes to contend against the passions of man." What result then ought to be expected when malice employs reason to procure an edict from unthinking arrogance? Nothing but conspicuous folly. If one may acquire a tolerable knowledge of Latin and Greek authors at the expense of what little common-sense he originally possessed, surely we need not marvel that one may inherit a throne and rule a populous nation, though destitute of good judgment. Common-sense is a rare gift.

Accordingly, he who put the Medians forward in the battle of Thermopylæ, that they might be slain in his service because they presumed to differ from him in opinion, does not hesitate to sanction the bloody decree of his prime-minister. Taking from his finger the royal ring he gave it to Haman, thereby assenting to the promulgation of the infamous decree. This method of authenticating a legal document carries us back to a time prior to the invention of printing, when few could either read or write ; when nobles, princes and priests were ignorant to an extent that is nearly incomprehensible, rendering it necessary that documents should receive, instead of the sign-manual of their authors, simply their mark ; indeed, the seals we now affix to legal papers are interesting relics of a period when nearly all, including the instructors of the people and lordly archbishops,

were unable to append their signatures--those who wrote their names being fewer, most probably, than those who now sign by a mark.

Apparently it is an evidence either of rashness or of excessive confidence that the monarch proffers his ring with the royal name and that of the kingdom engraved thereon, that it might be used in authenticating an edict as yet unwritten. Composed, however, in the king's name, transcribed by his secretaries and sealed with his signet, the edict was speedily sent by post into all the provinces of the empire, authorizing the slaughter of "all Jews, both young and old, little children and women."

The edict may be considered as a specimen of the pompous style ; but since it was the production of "The Magnificent," the vizier of Persia's boastful monarch, it is less ridiculous in its flashy dress than some messages announced in the name of "the King of kings." Evidently, the presence in the revealed word of a decree so pompous as that of Haman ought not to disturb our faith. It is affirmed by some that the pulpit is in its decadence. We do not believe it. It is capable of maintaining its place in human society. If it is not it had better perish at once, without apologizing for its continued existence or indulging in metaphysical disquisitions. If it is willing to find its mission in presenting the "Water of Life" to souls dying of spiritual thirst, it will ever find a work sufficient to employ an angel's energies, and one which filled the Saviour's heart. The harvest it reaps for eternity will never be scanty.

The letters were sent by post, being carried with celerity from one royal station to another by mounted horsemen, who rode day and night regardless of the weather. In those early periods--long ere postal facilities or telegraphic wires enabled private citizens to communicate

one with another though separated by an entire continent—monarchs stationed riders at convenient distances for the transmission of royal edicts. Of the facilities of this nature, which existed during the reign of Xerxes, Herodotus speaks with enthusiasm. As compared, however, with means at present employed for communicating intelligence—whereby we are enabled to read in the morning papers a summary of the events which occurred throughout the civilized world on the preceding day—these lauded agencies seem rude and tardy to an intolerable degree.

The munificence of Xerxes as indicated in these words, “The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee,” though surprising as coming from one whom his age charged with avarice, is nevertheless in keeping with his conduct on at least one other occasion. On the expedition to Greece his entire army was entertained by Pythias, the most opulent prince, next to Persia’s monarch, of those extravagant times. The host proffered his guest seven and a half million dollars toward defraying the expenses of the Grecian war. Xerxes, who allowed no one to outdo him in liberality, gratefully acknowledged the royal munificence, but respectfully declined the favor and compelled his entertainer to accept a gift.

The heartlessness of the edict promulgated by Haman has induced some to question the truthfulness of the narrative, assuming that human nature is incapable of such cruelty. In this there might be some show of reason, were the enactment without a parallel and the cruelty contemplated such as no age ever experienced. Alas! it is otherwise, as history abundantly testifies. Read the edicts which emanated from the palace of Cæsar, or from that of Nero, the Roman emperor who

lighted his gardens at night by the burning bodies of Christians, and fiddled while fires, kindled most probably at his own suggestion, were consuming the capital, rendering thousands homeless and penniless. Trace the consequences, written in crimson, of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Enumerate the countless thousands who perished in the Netherlands under the attempts made to force an obnoxious faith upon a resolute people. Examine the laws which were enacted against liberty of conscience in Scotland. Follow Laud and Claverhouse as by edict and sword they carried desolation and weeping into every neighborhood, through highland glen and on fertile plain, wheresoever men presumed to assemble for worship according to forms not prescribed by act of Parliament. Even women and children were inhumanly butchered in the name of our holy religion. Spell out, amid tears, the laws which have rendered the name of Bloody Mary infamous, and have left a record of acts so dyed that the waters of oblivion could scarcely obliterate it. Her dreams were of slaughter; her prayers were for power to exterminate those whom she detested with the full energy of her impulsive nature. To change the scene, witness the cruelty of Cortes toward the Tuzcucans in Mexico, and especially toward their amiable, religious prince.* Witness the deep duplicity of this same conqueror, as with unblushing effrontery, while endeavoring to convert the Tlascalans to Christianity, he is deliberately planning for their complete subjugation, practising treach-

* This prince, though a semi-barbarian, composed sacred poetry worthy a place in Christian literature. Rising above the idolatry around him he sang: "Weave thy chaplet of flowers and sing thy songs of praise to the All-Powerful, unknown God, Creator of the universe, on whom alone we can rely for consolation and support."

ery toward those to whose fidelity and bravery he is largely indebted for his conquest of the wealthy and powerful Aztec empire. Read the edicts he promulgated in Mexico's capital. Trace his unprincipled dealings with the magnanimous Montezuma. As a further commentary upon the cruelty of which human nature is capable, look in upon the scenes in Paris on the morning of August 21st, 1572—St. Bartholomew's day—when "His most Christian Majesty," Charles IX., was engaged in executing secret orders for the slaughter of his Protestant subjects. Under his solemn pledge of protection and on his own invitation, they are present to celebrate, as they imagine, a marriage between the Protestant king of Navarre and the monarch's sister. Suddenly the great bell of the palace gives forth a signal understood by all save the doomed. The bells of the churches peal back an answer. Everything is ready. Instantly hired assassins, led by priests bearing a crucifix in one hand and a sword in the other, rush forward under the cover of darkness and attack the defenceless Protestants huddled together like sheep for slaughter. The streets run with blood. The yells of the murderers blend with the confused noise of the terror-stricken crowd, making a scene of wild confusion upon which the inmates of pandemonium might look with horror. The gateways to the palace are blocked with the bodies of the dead and the dying. From a window in the royal chamber the king's voice may be heard above the groans of the suffering and the curses of the soldiers, shouting, "Slay them, slay them." Those who succeeded in effecting an entrance into the palace are before the king pleading for mercy and reminding him of his pledge of protection; lo, they receive their only answer as his own sword is plunged into their bosoms and their dulled ears, as they lie dying at his feet,

catch his words: "No quarter, slay all." At dawn Paris exhibited a spectacle over which demons might weep—blood on the sidewalks, carcasses in the gutters, carts gathering up the dead and dumping them into the river, terror pictured on the countenance of every Protestant, smiles of delight flitting across the features of Papists. The king is in an ecstasy of joy. To the Pope he despatches a special messenger with the joyous intelligence: "Tell him the Seine flows more majestically after receiving the dead bodies of the heretics." The Pope and the cardinals solemnly returned thanks for the slaughter of the "heretics." A medal was struck to commemorate the event. A painting was made representing the scene. It hangs upon the walls of the Vatican in this nineteenth century.

Surely the extreme cruelty of Haman's edict does not discredit the narrative. History furnishes examples in abundance. Human nature is capable of great ferocity.

From Haman's haughtiness and malice turn to contemplate the humility and love of Him before whom the king has commanded every knee to bow. "He came to His own and His own received Him not." Did those who should have been His loyal subjects exalt Him above every name? Did they even content themselves with declining to worship Him? Nay; they designated Him "Galilean," "wine-bibber," "friend of publicans and sinners." Persecutions bitter and unreasonable hastened in the footsteps of revilings. Did He repel them in the spirit of Haman? Far otherwise. When others anathematized, He blessed. When others reviled, He pitied. When others displayed hatred, He exercised love. Even when crowned with thorns and insulted, no word of unkindness escaped His lips. "Led as a lamb to the slaughter, He opened not His mouth." Crucified, He prayed, "Father, forgive them."

Though the malice of His enemies seemed to win for them a victory, His forbearance won for Him an eternal triumph. He ascended to the Father, where He ever liveth to plead for the pardon of those whose happiness in eternity shall afford satisfactory evidence that the victories of love are more beneficent than those of hate ; its rewards more magnificent and more lasting.

Though we may scorn Haman's example, we shall find it an arduous undertaking to imitate Christ's. "Love your enemies," "Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," "Pray for them that despitefully use you"—these are commands which human nature is slow to obey ; indeed, those who have put forth more strenuous exertions than others to comply with them are most ready to confess how far they come short of meeting the high demands of Heaven's law. Happily, the fulness and the certainty of the reward is an incentive to increasingly strenuous exertions. If malice unbars the floodgates of misery—hatred being hell—love, be it remembered, opens the portals of glory—indeed, is heaven begun on earth. What an irresistible impulse would be given to charity were we able constantly to bear in mind that if in our judgment others have erred in their treatment of us, there is strong probability that we have also erred in our treatment of them ! It would be the inauguration of a new era were all disposed to remember that to cherish the remembrance of wrongs is fiendish, to forgive is Godlike : to err is human, to bury the remembrance of a brother's frailties is divine.

III.

GLEAMS OF COMING GREATNESS.

"I know not where God's islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care."

J. G. WHITTIER.

"The child-like faith, that asks not sight,
Waits not for wonder or for sign,
Believes because it loves aright,
Shall see things greater, things divine."

JOHN KEBLE.

"Let us be content to do the thing we can,
And not presume to fret because it's little."

MRS. E. B. BROWNING.

"Men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong." —EMERSON.

THREE agencies ordinarily concur in the history of those who rise from obscurity to adorn lofty station—sterling merit, favoring providences, strong faith in the results of honest endeavors. Though without worth one may reach an honorable position, he cannot command respect. A concurrence of propitious circumstances may open the way for unrecognized ability to attain promotion, but unless there is a certain measure of faith, sufficient to inspire perseverance, thereby prompting to the improvement of opportunities as they present themselves, advancement will search for another whose faith is

stronger and his efforts more untiring. Merit and that form of faith whose attendant is energy can accomplish much, but unless Heaven smiles, opening avenues to advancement, it is entirely possible that the intrinsic greatness which might have shone in exalted station shall find an unmarked grave in the sequestered vale where inglorious Miltons sleep.

Providence opens avenues through which merit may attain elevation. Consequently, times in which momentous events occur unveil greatness which would otherwise remain undiscovered; nay, the occurrences of such periods are largely instrumental in producing eminent men, elevating the more deserving and developing in them qualities which the exigencies of human society tend to inspire within souls stirred by popular movements in which they are intensely interested—"et quorum sunt magna pars." Possibly, it would be more accurate to affirm that God raises up men for the accomplishment of his purposes and educates them under his own providential dealings. For the coming of Moses he prepared the way by permitting the Egyptians to increase the burdens imposed upon the Israelites: "When the tale of bricks is doubled Moses comes." His fitness for the position upon which he entered was increased during the period in which the responsibilities of commander, lawgiver, judge and leader devolved upon him. The stirring events in the history of his people and the duties exacted from him developed the merit of youth into a completeness of character which has rendered his name illustrious. Though he sleeps in his unknown grave, the memory of his deeds still lives, and will live as long as human hearts appreciate true nobility. In like manner, David was chosen of the Lord when but "a stripling;" and his character was compacted, strengthened and perfected

by the hardships he endured. It was the blended effect of personal merit, favoring providences and strength of faith which no adversity could destroy. Are we not authorized in saying as much of the Apostles? Most of them when called of the Lord were plain fishermen, possessing the elements of a noble character and strong faith, it is true, but in other respects scarcely distinguishable from the mass of their countrymen, whose names, having been known only in the high courts of a religion that had congealed into Phariseism, have long since perished. In early life they exhibited nothing more than germs of power, glimmerings of future influence in a church yet to be rendered visible by the destruction of formalism. That they possessed sterling merit and unconquerable faith is evinced in the fact that though their Master's fidelity to a spiritual religion procured an ignominious death, they adhered to his cause and succeeded in establishing a brotherhood in which respect for its early advocates is blended with the worship of that name that is above every name.

These truths find, as we apprehend, an apt illustration in the life of

MORDECAI.

Who was Mordecai? The record replies, "The son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; who had been carried away with Jeconiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away." Are we to understand that Mordecai was one of the captives taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon? This, some view as a possible interpretation. It involves, however, the assumption that the events recorded in the book occurred prior to the termination of the Babylonish captivity, unless we are prepared to admit that Mordecai

was an extremely old man at the time of his elevation. But the great improbability of this is demonstrated by the extreme difficulty of supposing that Esther should have been chosen for her beauty, if she was Mordecai's cousin, and he not less than a hundred and twenty-six years of age. The final siege of Jerusalem was undertaken by Nebuchadnezzar in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign; and after lasting nearly two years terminated in 586 B. C. Consequently, Jeconiah, the king of Jerusalem before Zedekiah, must have been carried away as early as 599 B.C. Xerxes became monarch of Persia in 485 B.C., one hundred and fourteen years later. Hence Mordecai, if born in Judea and porter at the palace gate in the twelfth year of Xerxes' reign, must have been a hundred and twenty-six years old. If Ahasuerus is to be identified with Artaxerxes (who succeeded Xerxes in 465 B.C.), Mordecai, if born in Palestine, must have reached the advanced age of one hundred and forty-six when he displaced Haman in the Persian court.

Nor is it possible to identify Ahasuerus with any monarch who preceded Xerxes—with either Cambyzes or Darius Hystaspes; and since it can be proved almost to a certainty that Ahasuerus is Xerxes, we are assuredly justified in considering Kish the person who was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. This interpretation, moreover, is natural, being in conformity with the rules of syntax and consistent with known facts. It dates the events of the book subsequent to the return from the captivity, and enables us to credit the plausible conjecture of Dr. Lightfoot that Mordecai went up to Jerusalem to assist in the rebuilding of the temple, and on the cessation of the work returned to Persia to do service for the large number of Jews still remaining in the land of exile.

From Kish to Mordecai are four generations—say, one

hundred and twenty-six years, allowing thirty-one and a half years to a generation. From the carrying away of Jeconiah (599 B. C.) to the twelfth year of Xerxes (473 B. C.) is precisely one hundred and twenty-six years, thus strongly confirming the reasons previously adduced in support of the now accepted theory that the Ahasuerus who married Esther was Xerxes.

Josephus says that Mordecai was one of the chief personages of the Jews. The Septuagint says, "He designed to make Esther his wife."

Was Mordecai possessed of sufficient merit to command admiration—giving glimpses of coming greatness? Confining ourselves to the record, as given in the sacred narrative, we find:

1. He was kind to his orphan cousin. He brought her up, adopting her as his own daughter. He was intensely solicitous for her welfare; "He walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did and what should become of her." He was her counsellor, guardian, friend. Assuredly kindness, and especially to the friendless, is a trait of character worthy of praise and likely to secure honor, sooner or later, for its possessor. "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed." "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack."

He seems to have possessed respect for womanhood—what Charles Lamb in one of his essays of Elia designates, "reverence for the sex." Are we not justified in affirming that this is indicative of nobility? Certainly we have the right to believe that it tends to purify the nature of him who possesses it, and to elevate it as well. Love of woman, as woman, produces beneficent results, which few can afford to dispense with. It aids in developing perfection of character. Man's life is centred in that of woman.

2. He possessed good judgment. He advised Esther not to reveal her kindred. He did not enjoin her to deny her nationality, much less to become alienated from her suffering countrymen ; but he exhorted her to maintain silence in reference to her descent. Deeply as he loved his nation and ardently as he coveted royal favor in its behalf, he would not embarrass the queen in her delicate situation, nor seek to employ the affections of the monarch as a means of advancing the interests of his people, though the oppressions they were enduring called loudly for relief. He will await deliverance from Israel's God, carefully watching the indications of providence, and endeavoring, meanwhile, to induce Esther to strengthen her influence with the king. "The prudent man looketh well to his going." "To know how to wait is the great secret of success." "Thy servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted."

3. He was humble. He sat as porter at the royal gate of the palace and was contented. Had he been ambitious he could easily have disclosed the relation he bore to the queen and might have received some post of honor or emolument. He is entirely content. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

"Humility is the softening shadow before the statue of Excellence ;

Humility is the fair-haired maiden that calleth worth her brother,
The gentle, silent nurse that fostereth infant virtues.

Humility bringeth no excuse ; she is welcome to God and man."

4. He was loyal to justice. When two of the chamberlains sought to lay hands on the king he disclosed the plot to the queen, who by reporting it to the monarch delivered the culprits over to the vengeance of law, and "they were both hanged on a tree." One disloyal to

the monarch or weak by virtue of having imbibed mistaken conceptions of mercy, might have satisfied himself with concealing a knowledge of the conspiracy ; not so Mordecai. With him justice is regnant. He will not knowingly permit the enemy of the Jews to be assassinated, though his death might hold out hope of a favorable turn in the fortunes of his suffering countrymen. "Though he heap up silver as the dust and prepare raiment as the clay, he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver."

"The stainlessly just, time shall call him forth
From the modest shade, to light and bless the earth."

W. C. BRYANT.

5. He was conscientious, and to a right-minded person the approval of conscience is the richest reward, one which depends upon himself and of which no other can rob him. Mordecai refused to bow before Haman. Many motives, it is true, may be assigned for the refusal. It may be said, he was envious and proud, for "as proud go behind as before," and there be those "who despise pride with even a greater pride." But as his subsequent life affords no confirmation of this theory, it is difficult to believe that he was either envious or haughty. Again, it may be said, he was prompted by malice, Haman being an Agagite, that is an Amalekite, one of the hated race which without provocation fought with the Israelites in Raphidim (Exodus 17 : 16), and with whom they were commanded to wage a war of extermination. If Haman belonged to this ancient race, this may perhaps account for Mordecai's refusal to bow, since the enmity of the Jews toward this cruel people was of old standing and very deadly. Against them the first king of Israel was commanded to wage war ; and for sparing them and

their cattle he was rejected of the Lord as king (1 Sam. 15 : 8-11). Agag, their leader, was by the prophet Samuel "hewed in pieces before the Lord." Subsequently David undertook to complete their destruction, and succeeded in breaking their power as a nation, "smiting them from twilight even until the evening of the next day ; and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men."

"If the monkey reigns, dance before him," is a proverb which evidently had little force with Mordecai. If Haman does not deserve respect, he shall not receive reverence from him. If he is descended from the Amalekites and is denominated an Agagite because their king bore the name of Agag, or because he is a descendant of the royal family, Mordecai's hostility proceeds from settled convictions—hatred of Israel's inveterate enemy was with him a religious duty.

In the Septuagint, as also in the apocryphal portion of Esther, Haman is called a Macedonian ; and in the latter, Mordecai is represented as saying, "I did this that I might not prefer the glory of man above the glory of God." When we consider the kind of homage which was demanded in Persia toward kings and court favorites—a species of worship which even the Greeks regarded as impiety—we find no difficulty in concluding that Mordecai's refusal proceeded from conscientious convictions. Indeed, the narrative clearly intimates that he declined on the ground of religious scruples. Those who advised him to comply with the royal order, on finding he did not, desired to see whether his matters would stand with the king, "for he had told them that he was a Jew." If arraigned for disobedience to law, he seems to have expected that Ahasuerus would accept

the plea of conscientious objections against bowing before any but Jehovah.

Kind, prudent, humble, just and conscientious, need we marvel that Mordecai rose from lowly station to become chief minister of state? As he possessed principle, his life, even in days of obscurity, gives glimpses of the possibility of his becoming as renowned as he is deserving.

PROVIDENCE FAVORING MORDECAI'S PROMOTION.

It would be improper to suppose that Heaven's interposition was in no way connected with merit, much less that it was dissevered from human exertion; "God is a good worker, but he loves to be helped;" "God gives every bird its food, but he does not throw it into the nest." Providentially, Mordecai became acquainted with a conspiracy against the king, perhaps by being requested to join it, possibly by overhearing the traitors. In this an unseen hand is guide, but when he determines to reveal the plot to Esther, his own character is in great measure the determining agency.

Though he has saved the life of the king, he is not promoted. He returns to his humble duties. God's time for enlargement has not yet come; but though modesty may stand in the way of present advancement, it cannot prevent a permanent record of services rendered. "Everything comes in time to him who can wait." "Get thy distaff ready and God will send thee flax."

By the simple fact that a record is made of the services of a porter, preparation is made for the stirring events of the future. Indeed, there has evidently been a series of providences, all tending to the same result, the exal-

tation of Mordecai and the deliverance of the Jewish Church. Ahasuerus, in a drunken revel, orders Vashti to present herself in the banqueting hall ; how easily he might have taken a different whim ! A different result, no doubt. Again ; the queen declines to obey the command—evidently she might have complied, thereby rendering the events recorded in Esther an impossibility. The royal counsellors advise divorce—they might have recommended forgiveness, perhaps would have done so except for the imperious will and haughty temper of the monarch. Had Vashti been pardoned, Mordecai most probably would not have become prime-minister, nor the Jews have obtained victory over their enemies. Esther is chosen to succeed the repudiated queen. Is it possible to conceive of anything more fortuitous than the selection of Mordecai's cousin from ten thousand aspirants to the honor of succeeding the divorced queen ? Who can predict what will be the choice of an arbitrary sovereign ? Haman is advanced—many another might have been ; others were quite as worthy, and possibly as obsequious. He is an insolent, proud man—he might have been so humble, or at least so politic, as to have disregarded the slight given him by Mordecai ; the chain of providence would have been broken. The king commands all to bow before his arrogant, well-dressed, polished—nobody ; due honor might have been shown his favorite in some other way, thereby averting a conflict with the Jewish porter. Many motives—all seemingly save conscientious convictions—dictate compliance with the royal order on the part of Mordecai ; but though declinature will surely bring trouble, he persistently refuses to bow. His heroic courage and manly resolution, though extremely dangerous and apparently impolitic, become efficient instrumentalities in effecting future deliverance. What threatens

to be the ruin of the Jewish people becomes the means of their enlargement. "Offend one monk and the lap-pets of all crows will flutter as far as Rome," inaugurating persecution likely to end in annihilation ; and yet the offence given by Mordecai, though an affront to the monarch and to all his subjects, becomes a necessary agency not only in his own elevation but as well in the deliverance of an oppressed church from the cruelty of her malignant enemies.

Mordecai's companions, even his own countrymen, most probably considered him singular, if not obstinate ; but life at court, which is frequently a short cut to ruin, is quite as often destructive of independence and hostile to true manliness of character. Consequently, he was as likely to have correct views of duty as either those already in the sunshine of royal favor or seeking by subserviency to attain that coveted prize. A multitude can as easily err as one man, especially if selfish considerations enter into the question, for as a rule there is about as much moral principle in a crowd as there is reason in a mob. It is always safer for one to do his own thinking than to allow an irresponsible coterie of self-constituted advisers to think for him. Mordecai thinking alone to-day, presently becomes Mordecai thinking for the entire nation. The man who has acquired a reputation for independence of thought and integrity of purpose has an almost irresistible influence, for it is well known that most persons seldom presume to think except according to patterns prepared by the present age, or inherited from a preceding ; nor is honesty of intention so universal that its manifestation does not elicit admiration.

"Cold broth hot again, that loved I never :
Eternal truth said afresh, that loved I ever."

The courage to be true to conviction, though it may be unpopular, is somewhat rare. "Future honor and immediate profit are not invariably found in the same sack;" many snatch wildly after the one containing present advantages, and of course miss the one which contains greater rewards though more remote.

Haman, having secured the approval of the monarch to the bloody edict, and having sent to all the provinces the decree which apparently sealed the fate of the Jews, set down with the king to drink; but Shushan was perplexed. Revelling in the palace, consternation and sadness in every Jewish home! Alas! how seldom are the woes of humble suffering permitted to enter the palatial residences of the wealthy and the powerful! Their own selfish conduct may cause anguish such as only helpless innocence can feel, but a seared conscience may be allowed to slumber, perhaps during years of cruelty, till in the mysterious unfoldings of a hitherto hidden providence the effects of folly are beginning to arouse the soul; then rising, it may lash its helpless possessor into a frenzy of terror, if not indeed into an agony of despair.

Haman ruling, Shushan perplexed—Mordecai sad but hopeful. What mysterious power sustains him? The answer to this question is found in

MORDECAI'S FAITH.

This which is quite apparent in the incidents already enumerated becomes still more conspicuous in the gloom which settled upon the Jewish communities in Shushan and in the provinces of Persia's empire. His reliance upon God is truly remarkable, being such as few could have exhibited under the circumstances. He felt the arrows of adversity, and in token of his grief "rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes, . . . and

cried with a loud and bitter cry ;” but far from despairing he possessed an unswerving conviction that enlargement and deliverance would come, though through what human source he could not surmise. Haman is triumphant ; but Mordecai consoles himself with the reflection that “the sun of all days has not yet set,” and that ere it sets present haughtiness may lie prostrate in the dust, and suffering innocence may be vindicated.

There is perhaps but little doubt that Mordecai passed hours—they come to nearly all—when gloom lay heavy upon the soul, when the shock he had felt seemed to render existence a blank, leaving little of hope before him save that which glittered around the gateway of death and seemed to whisper, “Abandon effort ; accept the inevitable”—seasons when the fruitlessness of labor, the unreasonableness of man, the malignancy of human enmity, the worthlessness of human sacrifice, the emptiness of the most ardent aspirations, and the inefficiency of goodness, leave the soul drifting upon the open sea of despondency with a torturing sense of loneliness—moments when faith in man, even faith in the church, is shaken, inducing the spirit to cast itself upon the Fatherhood of God, as the storm drives the wearied bird to its home in the rocks. But since faith still lives and can only live in the performance of present duty—which alone has the power of maintaining piety in the soul—he soon discovers that continued reliance upon God is urging him to labor for the realization of the results he covets. Than work could he have given any better evidence of faith ? “Faith without works is dead being alone.” “Every act Christ did he called a duty.”

Agitated by conflicting emotions, he presents himself before the king’s gate, but presumes not to enter, since “none might enter clothed with sackcloth.” The pal-

ace is dedicated to gayety and frivolity, to indulgence and pleasure. The waves of adversity may roll over the entire nation, destroying happiness in every home, but by royal edict they shall dash themselves into quietness against the foundation-stone of Xerxes' lordly palace. How vain the decree! He may exclude the habiliments of sadness! Can his porters wave sorrow away? Nay, she enters the doors being shut. Can they bar out trouble? It has entered already. The miscarriage of ambitious schemes has left Ahasuerus the prey of remorse whose stings he cannot extract, and is ever vainly endeavoring to mitigate by plunging headlong into every species of sensual indulgence. Can he bid death stand waiting at the portal? Nay, every door opens at his knock; even the messengers he sends in advance to prepare his way enter so noiselessly and do their work so quietly that the perishable tabernacle is often nearly ready to crumble to pieces ere their presence is announced.

Declining the raiment sent by Esther to displace the garments of grief, Mordecai, at the solicitation of the queen, makes known to Hatach the cause of his grief, disclosing the exact nature of the decree promulgated against the Jews, and implores the queen's immediate intercession with the monarch on behalf of her doomed people. The queen, watched with jealous strictness lest she might go beyond the woman's apartment or hold conversation with any except those deputed by the king, is forced to content herself with sending a message through one who may prove, for aught she knows, disloyal to her interests. The wife of a sovereign, who was himself a species of prisoner in the royal palace, must forego the pleasure of communicating with Mordecai face to face. Accordingly she sends this communication:

“All knew, even the humblest subject in the most remote province, that the man or woman who unsummoned enters the inner court of the king must suffer the penalty of death, unless the king deigns to extend the golden sceptre. There is one irreversible law for all—for the queen as well as for inferior subjects. Therefore, uninvited I cannot enter; and especially since the affections of the monarch are apparently alienated from me. I have not been called these thirty days; when I shall be it is impossible to determine.”

The motives which led to the enactment of a law so unreasonable in its nature and so likely to involve the State in trouble, were no doubt as various in character as they were indeterminate in number. Motives arising from the promptings of pride, considerations of policy, the hope that being seldom seen, though frequently felt, the monarch might be regarded as a deity; the repression of complaints, often frivolous and always unwelcome, which might otherwise have reached him from his oppressed subjects; the protection of his officers from exposure in crimes which, though rendered necessary in carrying out his orders, were troublesome subjects for reflection; a desire to be left undisturbed in the pursuit of pleasure, and the disposition to have at least one regulation which should be a perpetual reminder that the king's will was law—these no doubt were a few of the motives which secured the promulgation of an edict so monstrous in its nature and so liable to prove disastrous to the interests of the nation as well as to those of the ruler.

But does the law forbid the approach of the queen? It does. Indeed this may have been one chief design in its enactment. It may have been a necessary agency in preventing her from obtaining a knowledge of conduct

which might exasperate her beyond the power of endurance, and might lead to intrigues involving others, and keeping the palace in perpetual turmoil. "One foe is too many and a hundred friends too few." The one will be incessantly trying to do some personal injury; the hundred will be simply expressing good wishes. The monarch therefore prefers to have neither friend nor foe, but to hold all at a respectful distance, each subject to his own imperious will.

Evidently Mordecai's faith was akin to that which removes mountains. He expects that Esther shall obtain favor before the king. He has an abiding conviction that God will rescue the Jewish nation; and as all other avenues of escape seem closed he counts on success through Esther's intercession. When all doors are bolted, it requires an almost unconquerable faith to believe that one will open, effecting deliverance. Without this faith, however, all will soon become barred except the doorway to despair. Faith sustains him, prompting him to try any expedient which promises even a faint chance of success. Without trying, how can he know which method God will approve? He is certain there is one instrumentality which God will employ; he will therefore search untiringly till he discovers it.

Character, favoring providence, faith, willingness to work—glimpses of coming greatness.

In endeavoring to improve the lessons contained in this narrative, let us not fail to observe that in all ages an unrelenting hostility has been exhibited by the world against the church. Indeed, why should we expect it would be otherwise? Did not God himself say in Eden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed"? Antagonism between good and evil would have been a thing unknown if God

had not put within the souls of his people an indestructible principle of grace which continually wars against wrong. This being true, is it possible that the church should exist without arousing the hostility of Satan ? for where God's church is there God has put enmity to every form of evil ; and where this exists, opposition in some form is certain to develop itself. Consequently, the amount of opposition which is brought to bear against the church is not infrequently the measure of her fidelity to the truth ; and the entire cessation of hostility is painful but conclusive evidence of apostasy.

May not the deliverance that came to Mordecai, and through him to the Jewish church, encourage us to hope that if the Christian brotherhood shall be kind to suffering humanity, humble in character, loyal to right and conscientious in defending settled convictions, enlargement will come, and the schemes of enemies be converted into agencies for their own destruction ? With faith to enter the avenues which providence opens and to wait by every closed door till one at least shall open, ultimate triumph would be certain. The world would be won for Christ. Alas ! with much talk about faith while eagerly pursuing policy, with insufficient confidence in the imperishable principles of God's Word to adhere to them under the fierce opposition of defiant infidelity, with professions of reliance dropping from our lips while degrading religion into an agency for raising funds to erect Gothic structures, may we not tearfully ask, " Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ? "

" How long, O Lord our God,
Holy and true and good,
Wilt thou not judge thy suffering church,
Her sighs and tears and blood."
" Come, then, Lord Jesus, come."

Another lesson : God's people are often in spiritual despondency. How frequently does it happen that the adversity which produces this depression is an agency in the production of future prosperity ! Let us therefore learn to grapple bravely with the difficulties which environ us, and the church as well, and patiently await the time of deliverance, when the despondent shall have joy and gladness, light and honor. "When you are an anvil, bear ; when you are a hammer, strike." In adversity, cheerful ; in prosperity, thoughtful.

"Faint not, Christian, though thy God
Smite thee with a chastening rod ;
Smite he must with father's care,
That he may his love declare."

A third lesson: "The darkest hour precedes the dawn." Be patient therefore. The seeds of change must have their time to grow. Not till they have grown can existing evils be uprooted ; nay, till then they must grow worse and worse. The successive links in the chain of providence are not welded by one blow ; and until they are welded the system of evil, for whose destruction they are preparing, must necessarily become hourly more appalling, for the way of the wicked is as darkness—growing continuously more intense. When once the links are welded by the hand of Omnipotence, human malignity cannot break them, even fiendish malice cannot preserve what they are dragging down to destruction.

"We cannot always trace the way
Where thou, our gracious God, dost move,
But we can always surely say
Thy will be done."

“When mystery shrouds our darkened path,
We'll check our dread, our doubts reprove ;
In this our soul sweet comfort hath,
It is thy love.”

“Breast the wave, Christian, when it is strongest,
Watch for day, Christian, when the night's longest,
Onward and onward, still be thine endeavor,
The rest that remaineth will be forever.”

IV.

GOD'S PURPOSE AND MAN'S DUTY.

“ Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on his firm decree ;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.”

ISAAC WATTS.

“ Put thou thy trust in God,
In duty's path go on ;
Fix on his word thy steadfast gaze,
So shall thy work be done.”

LUTHER.

THAT there is an overruling providence in the affairs of men few feel disposed to question—none should who have taken the pains to trace the footprints of the Creator upon the successive formations of geological epochs or to note providential dealings with the nations of the earth, particularly with those which have risen to prominence and perished, leaving only mementoes of buried greatness. A cursory examination of the more important crises in history leaves little room to doubt that an omnipotent hand controls human destiny ; that “ the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong.”

On the slope of a mountain overlooking the plain of Marathon, eleven Grecian generals were once engaged in a council of war. Shall they succumb to the empire which in fifty years has shattered nearly all the surrounding kingdoms ? or shall they trust to the small army

which Greece can furnish in a contest against the forces of Darius? Ten have voted. They stand five and five. Upon the decision of Callimachus is suspended the destiny of many nations. The vote is cast. It is for battle. In a few days Miltiades meets and conquers the Persian forces, rescuing Athens, indeed all southern Europe. Was there no providence in the life of Callimachus? none in that of Miltiades?

To believe that there was no divine interposition in the career of Alexander, who erected empires, crushed monarchies, organized victory from threatened defeat, dispelled the fears of friends, and sent consternation into the hearts of enemies, who at the decisive battle of Arbela irreparably crushed the Persian empire and brought the world at his feet, paving the way for the Greek language to herald the Gospel throughout the world—demands a degree of incredulity which intelligence is slow to covet.

That we may not multiply instances from profane history, we invite the reader to explain, if possible, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the results of the battle of Hastings, of Pultowa, of Blenheim, of Orleans, of Waterloo, of Saratoga. Were the issues in harmony with the arrogant assumption that man is the sole director in human affairs? Was there no evidence of a superintending agency, piercing, moving and governing all things? Have not the results proved as beneficent to succeeding ages as they seemed improbable to the age in which they occurred?

Emerging from the study of facts such as these to an examination of the teachings of ecclesiastical history, the student will find it difficult to repress the conviction that "God's kingdom ruleth over all;" and when he comes to a minute investigation of Jewish history or to the

history of redemption as deduced from Scriptures by President Edwards, he will be forced reverently to exclaim : " The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty ; the Lord is clothed with strength."

Few, accordingly, are disposed to question the existence of a hidden purpose running through the centuries—a purpose which connects the events of history as certainly as the concealed thread unites the diamonds that glitter upon the bosom of queenly beauty.

This general providence implies a particular, since in the nature of the case it is impossible to determine the momentous issues without controlling the details in which their causes originate. In some instances we may be incapable of tracing the connection between effects and the causes which unite to produce consequences co-extensive with human interests and measureless in duration ; but this tends quite as much to the increase of faith as to its destruction. To appreciate the blessings one receives, he does not need a degree of knowledge adequate to the task of explaining all the mysterious dealings of Providence. " A man need not be an architect to dwell in a house ;" nor does he need an exhaustive explanation of the marvellously complicated system of Providence in order to accept the theory that one intelligent mind controls all.

That providential operation is particular as well as general is often evinced by the occasion on which God's interposition is manifested. He frequently permits matters to come to extremity before he arrests causes seemingly upon the eve of producing disastrous effects ; then, as if some magic force were touched by the finger of omnipotence, agencies spring into being and acquire potency for the consummation of designs that are slowly unveiling themselves. For example, he purposes to de-

liver the Jews from the servitude of Egypt. The Egyptians, however, are permitted to increase the severity of their dealings and to reach the point when the Israelites seem likely to be reduced to helpless and perpetual slavery. Suddenly agencies hitherto unobserved are evoked, and the malice of the powerful Pharaoh consummates his own destruction.

Of the same truth an illustration may be found in God's deliverance of the chosen people from the power of the Philistines. He commissions his prophets to announce his purpose. He will rescue Israel. He nevertheless allows them to be first reduced to an abject state ; then when they are in a condition to recognize his interposition and ascribe honor to his name, he destroys their enemies, the cup of his indignation being full. Another instance : he has promised to deliver the Jewish Church from the Babylonish captivity. The agencies which are to effect this are noiselessly in operation. The Chaldean empire is ripening for destruction. His people, not perceiving the progress of the preparation for their deliverance, mournfully exclaim : " Our lives are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off." When they are on the verge of despair a mysterious hand writes on the walls of Belshazzar's banqueting hall, " Weighed in the balances and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." Providentially, Babylon's two-leaved gates are left open. The conqueror enters. The capital lies prostrate at his feet. The Jews receive royal permission to return to their native land. The temple is rebuilt.

The Sovereign of the universe works in this manner with the design, apparently, of making it more evident that deliverance is from his own hand, thereby evoking the gratitude of his people and compelling even the irre-

ligious to exclaim, "The Lord hath done great things for them."

The theory of a particular providence is also frequently illustrated in those events which are of a contingent character, not dependent on such a combination of secondary causes as renders the issue a matter of rational conjecture. Though directed by God's superintending hand, the issues appear quite fortuitous. It was decreed, for instance, that Ahab should fall in battle on a certain day. The prophet Micaiah so declared. Ahab, accordingly, used every precaution to thwart the divine purpose. He disguised himself that he might not be recognized by the enemy. He put on a complete armor. He requested Jehoshaphat to appear in battle in dress indicative of royal rank. In consequence of these precautions the two Syrian captains who strenuously endeavored to discover Ahab were completely baffled. God's purpose, however, did not fail of fulfilment; nor was human agency dispensed with. "A certain man drew a bow at a venture and smote the king of Israel between the joints of his harness." The weapon, though hurled in simplicity, reached its destination, finding an ill-fitting joint in the plates of mail.

Will any one presume to deny that the narrative under consideration furnishes an illustration of a superintending providence reaching to minute details? It was manifestly God's purpose to deliver the Jews. The agents to be employed were Haman, Mordecai, Esther, Hatach, Ahasuerus. Each had a special work to perform; each a specific frame of mind from which action should arise. Haman must chafe under conduct which he needlessly regarded as a deliberate insult. Mordecai must undertake to reverse the bloody decree, and to this end must feel aggrieved over the deplorable condition of his

countrymen. He must present himself while clothed in sackcloth under the eye of Esther. She, in turn, must be moved by affection to demand the cause of his grief. Hatach must convey the coveted information. Ahasuerus must arrive at the determination of counteracting the baleful effects of an edict which has been entered among the irreversible laws of the empire.

In Mordecai's judgment the certainty of the coming deliverance did not release from the necessity of employing means. He must strike along the seemingly impassable wall till he discovers the point at which egress is possible. One door, nay, a thousand doors may close ; one will open. He firmly believes some way will turn up, and therefore resolutely sets to work to aid Providence in turning up some way. What a blessing if all Christians could remember that action, not thought ; character, not emotion ; life, not hope ; work, not repining, renovate human society. Progress, especially in any cause having beneficent effects for mankind, is not only slow but is invariably the result of persevering effort. George Stephenson worked fifteen years at his locomotive before securing victory. His advice to the young was, "Do as I have done—persevere." The motto of Reynolds, the celebrated artist, was, "Work, work, work." In Christian enterprise, as well as elsewhere, the only thing which has efficiency is work, steeped, it is true, in prayer, but work none the less. Let us therefore labor in God's vineyard : "Periunt et imputantur"—the hours perish and are charged against us. Opposite the debit may there be a credit of efforts sincerely made, of labors consecrated in devotion.

In appealing to Esther to intercede with the monarch on behalf of her threatened countrymen, Mordecai does not hesitate to employ a consideration addressed directly

to the queen : “ Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews ”—an appeal to selfishness. In this we may discover considerable insight into human nature, for he evidently perceives that however potent religious considerations may be their influence is not likely to be diminished, but greatly augmented, by inducing the conviction that personal safety demands immediate and strenuous exertion. By identifying her own deliverance with that of her suffering kindred, causing her to view their interests as her own, he largely increases the probability of enlisting her services. He may be understood as gently intimating that if her nationality is still unsuspected, some malicious person will undoubtedly reveal it ; nay, if she deliberately refuses to do what she can, her best friends may be tempted to disclose the secret in order that she may be involved with them in the common ruin. Being in the king’s house, surrounded by jealousy, watched with strictness and within easy reach of the weapon of some hired assassin, she may find escape impossible ; while they may seek safety in flight and by sacrificing worldly possessions may continue existence in some foreign land where the anguish of remembered wrongs may be alleviated by recalling the merited death which overtook one who deliberately declined to employ the position she occupied in an effort for the deliverance of her afflicted countrymen.

This appeal may have originated in the conviction that possibly Esther was not exercising strong faith. Mordecai, therefore, employs worldly, even selfish considerations. Alas ! how often it happens that the Christian needs to be plied with arguments rooted in selfishness ere he can be induced to perform an unpleasant duty, especially if it involves the possibility of self-

sacrifice ! John Sterling well said, " The worst education which teaches self-denial is better than the best which teaches everything else but that." Strange, that though we announce ourselves followers of the Saviour, we should be so reluctant to endure hardship as good soldiers, while yet fulsome in the declaration, " No sweat, no sweet : no cross, no crown : no pains, no gains."

The second appeal connects itself with Mordecai's own faith, and is so worded as not merely to stir Esther's religious emotions, but to arouse ambition : " If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place." " Enlargement and deliverance" are certain to come ; if not from you, then from another. The honor which might have been yours may be turned to one more worthy. Your name may become a synonym for indifference to human anguish, if not of moral cowardice. You may miss the renown which is now within reach ; nay worse, neglect of duty may draw down the divine displeasure, consummating a destruction which is imminent—" thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." Trusting to divine interposition, while deliberately refusing to employ the agency which God has made available, is to invite ruin. " God helps those who help themselves." Therefore, while relying upon divine interposition, employ the means which Providence has made ready. Do duty ; then commit yourself to God's keeping. Regard heavenly admonitions, and heroically pursue the path of present obligation ; then will reliance upon Abraham's God be reasonable, being neither presumptuous nor superstitious.

His third appeal is a call to consider the probability that she had been raised from obscurity to become an instrument in the deliverance of her people, perhaps from

this calamity. "Be cautious, therefore, O Esther, about disregarding providential indications, and strong in the conviction that success will crown your efforts. If the hand of God is in this, the heart of the king will soften, heeding the request which comes from the saddened soul of one whose happiness is in his keeping."

It is somewhat remarkable that in this intensely religious appeal, as in the entire book, there is no mention of the name of God. The most plausible explanation, as already intimated, seems to be that it was intentionally omitted, most probably with the view of rendering the narrative less likely to offend the prejudices of Persians and more potent in producing the conviction that the Deity of the Jewish nation was the "King of kings and the Lord of lords," omnipotent in power, omniscient in wisdom, irreversible in purpose, and just in his dealings with men.

The appeal being sent, Mordecai in sackcloth and ashes awaits a response. A favorable decision from the queen is the only avenue through which God seems likely to effect deliverance for the Jewish nation. How great may become the social inequality of those who were once equals, who formerly occupied the same home! Mordecai is in poverty and obscurity; Esther, in purple and gold, in a palace and next the throne. He who is all a father could have been is now anxiously imploring the intercession of a daughter on whom fortune's smiles have been falling while adversity's bitter cup has been pressing his own lips. He who possessed merit without vanity, and loyalty to his monarch without ambition, is sorely grieved by a calamity which is causing lamentations in every synagogue of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. Haman meanwhile, exalted by a sudden turn in fortune's wheel, is quaffing the tears of the sor-

rowing and feeding a cruel heart on the shrieks of the anguished.

How ardently Mordecai is coveting the sympathy of one whom his self-sacrifice elevated to a position above his own ! Human sympathy, exhibited in practical ways, proves wondrous in power, multiplying joys and dividing sorrows. It is like sunshine upon rosebuds, unfolding hidden beauty and evoking new fragrance. Like May breezes upon consumptive cheeks, it brings back the glow of health where the pallor of death has been, and paints cheerfulness where despondency has been brooding too long already. It may not be like royal beneficence, a munificent gift of the hand ; it is a contribution of the heart more priceless than the wealth of the Indies and more imperishable. It may be incapable of explaining the mysteries of Providence ; it may be disqualified for recommending resignation to the Divine will ; possibly it may be powerless in effecting deliverance ; but when genuine it possesses inestimable value, though it may not open avenues from Marah to the land of Beulah.

Will Esther on the throne sympathize with Mordecai at the palace gate ? Are the advantages he fondly anticipated from the marriage to prove an illusion, as many of his previous hopes have done ? Will she forget him ? Will she despise her afflicted people ? Will she spurn their plea for aid ? Mordecai knows not ; but he may ascribe praise to Abraham's God that there is a kingdom where a broken heart is not despised—where the cry of the afflicted is not permitted to pass unheeded.

While thoughts such as these are occupying the mind of Mordecai, others no less melancholy are filling Esther's. Is it wise to undertake the reversal of an irreversible decree ? Is it prudent to press unbidden into the presence of the monarch ? Possibly his fickle love has been

turned into hatred by the intrigues of Haman. Quite probably he will not deign to extend the sceptre, but in haughtiness of spirit and malignity of temper may permit the law to take its course, consigning me to an ignominious death for presuming to intrude upon his coveted retirement. If it shall be otherwise, and I obtain an audience with the monarch, can I present the claims of my suffering countrymen with such eloquence as to command attention ? with such pathos as to engage his affections ? with such force as to overcome his disposition to maintain a position publicly assumed ? with such persuasive power as to conquer an almost unconquerable will ? How slight my chances of success ! And failure is almost certain destruction. If Vashti was divorced for respectfully declining to accede to a royal request, can anything less than death be my fate for presuming to ask a Persian monarch to repeal an irreversible law ?

Perish I indeed may, but death were a relief, especially if purchased by a laudable endeavor to avert ruin from my doomed kindred. To die in the effort is surely more honorable than to stolidly await the doom decreed against us. My purpose is formed. I cast in my lot with my suffering countrymen. Soliciting their prayers and requesting the observance of a fast, "I will go in unto the king, which is not according to law ; and if I perish, I perish."

Though ready for self-sacrifice, she is unwilling to make application to the king till she and her people have made supplication to God. When every effort has been put forth to insure the success of the undertaking, she will imitate the example of the four leprous men at Samaria's gate : "Why sit we here until we die ? Come and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians ;

if they save us alive, we shall live ; and if they kill us, we shall but die.”

Mordecai's faith which staggered not, but against hope believed in hope, has triumphed. He has secured his request—intercession is promised. He does not rest content, however, with this. His confidence in the Divine purpose, and his success in securing Esther's intercession, far from producing presumptuous inactivity, stimulate him to engage in religious exercises with strengthened faith—Heaven may bless the agencies they are employing. He does all that Esther commands.

For three days in every synagogue, and in every Jewish home, Esther is remembered—petitions for success arising from hearts humbled by fasting. Each suppliant is practising self-denial ; one thought of devotion outweighs them all. The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. Each sincere petition may have influence in procuring the coveted result. The intensity of these prayers may be conceived ; it cannot be expressed.

The narrative contains lessons for at least two classes : for the irreligious, and for the religious.

From Heaven's court has gone forth the decrees, irreversible : “ The soul that sinneth it shall die,” “ The wages of sin is death,” “ Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,” “ He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.” Condemned already, unless the penalties can be averted or the decree reversed, death is inevitable. Alas ! many, instead of seeking deliverance from impending destruction, are apparently indifferent, uttering no sigh of anguish and offering no prayer—awaiting in seeming unconcern the gradual approach of an appalling doom. Are they vainly counting on the reversal of an unalterable decree ? Are they

hoping that others will rescue them from the destruction which indifference is inviting, indeed is tending to render certain? Are they expecting that ere the decree shall be put into execution, one impulsive effort of theirs will stay the hand of vengeance?

Would it not be wise to seek the sympathy and the prayers of any who can aid in discovering a pathway of hope from encircling dangers? There are those who are ready to "bear one another's burdens." There are those who "weep with those that weep." There are those who seem to secure favors from the "King of kings," who enlist the sympathy of his best "Beloved." These, by disclosing the case to Him whose intercession is ever prevalent, may become instruments in the procurement of divine pardon, converting transient fears into eternal hopes.

Neither the prayers of the church, however, nor the ministrations of a priesthood have any such potency as to relieve the individual suppliant from the necessity of imploring Divine pardon and of making self-exertion for deliverance. They may prove instrumentalities in securing spiritual strength, but they cannot be safely permitted to displace personal effort. What the applicant needs is mercy in response to his own supplication. Personal guilt needs personal pardon.

Nor is it less evident that he who seeks the favor of the king must be in earnest. There are dangers to be encountered. There are numberless chances against the success of the applicant. After overcoming the disposition to delay, he has risks to run, doubts to conquer, enemies to subdue, a torturing sense of uncertainty to repel, a deceitful heart to master. If success is to crown his endeavors there must be intense earnestness. He needs to resolve

“ Now all other hope is past,
Only this is left at last ;
Here before thy cross I lie,
Here I live, or here I die.”

When continuance in the city of destruction is certain ruin, feeling is valueless unless it impels to effort. Action, not emotion, is the distinguishing characteristic of Christianity. An acknowledgment of the truth must impel to conduct corresponding therewith. Conviction must result in deeds. Is there not a disposition to exalt feeling above loyalty to convictions of duty ? to prefer the sweet remembrance of forgiveness to self-sacrificing conduct in the exigencies of every-day life ? to place more reliance upon an ecstasy of hope than upon obedience of divine commands ? The great business of life is to care, not how we end our days, but how we spend them ; then they will end themselves, and will end well.

The narrative contains lessons for the religious.

The Christian should make no concealment of his piety. If Esther dared to reveal her religion, requesting her maidens to unite in imploring the interposition of Jehovah, surely the Christian ought not to cloak his. Is he ashamed to acknowledge his allegiance to the King whose favor is life ?

Sympathy shown to the suffering is advantageous to the giver as well as to the receiver. Esther was blessed in showing kindness quite as much as the Jews were in receiving it. Nor is this a blessing which few have the opportunity of receiving. In every community there are Mordecais in lowly station, sorrowing ones in sackcloth, poverty's children in wretchedness, despondent hearts in the shadows of despair. In conferring sympathy upon such, and in bestowing more substantial favors, rewards are certain. The scriptural declaration is here abun-

dantly verified : " It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Those who resist the evidence that the church is not infrequently in a condition calling for immediate deliverance, are enemies of true religion, not friends. Not so did Esther. She believed what Mordecai reported. Are we not justified in fearing that many Christians, by determinedly refusing to believe the church in an unhealthful condition, are innocently strengthening the fetters that bind the struggling people of God? Satan seldom asks more than that the church should believe herself in excellent condition, for she will then decline to make exertion for the removal of evils that dishonor her in the eyes of those who know her condition but too well. When he can induce her members to exclaim, " We be Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise ;" or can succeed in silencing her disapproval of sins committed under the cloak of religion, he needs no more. Wickedness is content if let alone. It seldom expects more than the indorsement of silence. The respectability which honorable association affords will enable it to accomplish all else. Phariseeism will answer Satan's purpose quite as well as atheism—often better.

" If every one would see to his own reformation,
How very easily you might reform a nation."

Christians should possess moral heroism. An ounce of courage is worth a ton of tears. Is there any reason why wickedness should possess a monopoly of the former? any reason why religion should be associated with the latter? Esther was heroic. Mordecai was dauntless. The number and the influence of the foes of the church were far from inducing him to act as though

the brotherhood of believers existed by mere sufferance. Embarrassment was not permitted to destroy manliness. Difficulties were not allowed to diminish faith. Courage was not wanting, for he believed in the final victory of truth. Talking is poor eloquence ; heroic effort melts human hearts.

If desirous of securing deliverance for the church, we should endeavor to impress upon each a keen sense of personal responsibility. Mordecai succeeded in imparting to Esther the conviction that she was under obligation to do what she could. Accordingly, relying upon her own exertions, she announced her readiness to perish in the effort to rescue the suffering people of God. Were it possible to produce, in individual believers, a becoming sense of personal responsibility, how speedily would many of the people of the land become Christians ; how soon would the world be brought to acknowledge God ! “ True glory springs from the silent conquest of self.”

We should endeavor to sustain those who are passing through trials for us. Mordecai and the Jewish people engaged in prayer while Esther exposed herself to death on their behalf. Alas ! how often is desertion the portion of those who undertake to exalt the honor of the Master ! Their self-denial in endeavoring to rescue the church from Phariseeism procures abandonment, if not hostility. What happened to Paul is the usual portion of those who strive to imitate his example ; the more ardently they love the less are they beloved.

Assurance of deliverance should impel to the performance of present duty. Mordecai firmly believed that “ enlargement and deliverance ” would come. Did he give over exertion and calmly await miraculous interposition ? Nay, the question, “ Lord, what wilt thou have

me to do?" was converted into the anxious inquiry, What can I do? What he deemed possible he strenuously endeavored to accomplish. Are there none who presumptuously employ assurance of redemption as an opiate to the conscience? none who justify non-exertion by affirming, "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure"?

V.

MORAL COURAGE.

“ In the good man’s breast,
Justice and piety with valor reign ;
He, though the fabric of the shaken world
Should burst in thundering ruin o’er his head,
Calm and unmoved would view the crushing wreck.”

C. P. LAYARD.

“ The brave man is not he who feels no fear,
For that were stupid and irrational ;
But he whose noble soul its fears subdues,
And bravely dares the danger nature shrinks from.”

FRANCIS QUARLES.

“ INCREASING years,” says Hillard, “ brings increasing respect for those who do not succeed in life as success is commonly estimated.” He who accepts the scriptural standard of morality finds it difficult, in some instances impossible, to attain what the world denominates success. He may have, however, what is better, worth of character, purity of life, integrity of heart, and a well-founded hope of unending joys—possessions which he may view as evidences of Heaven’s especial benediction, though some, perchance, may be disposed to regard them as valueless, or as the unearned products of capricious fortune.

Were we severally called upon to enumerate the elements of that success which is satisfying in its character and beneficent in its effects, the catalogues presented

might differ exceedingly ; and yet, possibly, on minute examination, a certain measure of unanimity might be discovered. Substantial agreement might be found to exist in reference to the essentials of a character which was really worthy of success and likely to secure it.

We might concur, for instance, in recognizing humility as an important element, since it is seemingly necessary in preventing us from growing envious of others, and as indispensable in shielding us from the malignancy of those whom envy has embittered. As a rule, the successful recognize and honor success in others, since they are themselves humble. On the other hand, the unsuccessful seldom admire heartily. To one possessed of a narrow nature the generous appreciation of others is almost impossible. He involuntarily exclaims :

“ When Heaven with such parts has blessed him,
Have I not reason to detest him ? ”

And yet, as Dr. Johnson has well said, “ No quality will get a man more friends than a sincere admiration of the qualities of others.” Friends pave the way to prosperity. Of success, therefore, humility is quite evidently an essential element.

The logic of facts will be likely also to induce the conviction that no amount of genius can dispense with concentration of energy ; which, in a world where eminence is rarely attained in more than a single line of activity, has been characteristic of the successful in every age. To this most persons would probably be prompted to add strength of character, force of will, a determination potent enough to command favoring circumstances and to pursue a single aim through all obstacles till well-formed plans were triumphantly consummated. To secure this it is quite manifest that self-re-

liance is indispensably necessary. In a world of intense selfishness every one must rely mainly upon his own exertions. Moreover, the little assistance that others can render is likely to be withheld unless reliance upon self produces the conviction that success is assured and that the interests of others are likely to be subserved by aiding in the furtherance of an object which is almost certain to be obtained, no matter what amount of opposition may be arrayed against it. To produce this conviction is there no need of good judgment, enabling one to form purposes that are attainable and to employ agencies that commend themselves to minds of average ability? To avoid arousing hostility, and as an agency in extracting the sting from jealousy, are not kindness of heart and suavity of manner necessary? Do not these pave the way for the attainment of results that were otherwise beyond the reach of even hope? Moreover, in order to insure success is there no call for the possession of self-respect and a becoming regard to the personality of others, without which one is as likely to miss benedictions from Heaven as honors from his fellow-men? Heaven respects those who respect themselves; and we find it difficult, almost impossible, to love those who wound our self-respect. Warm-heartedness has wondrous power. "Civility," says Lady Montague, "costs nothing and buys everything." One may possess the "*suaviter in modo*" without surrendering the "*fortiter in re*."

Even the most scanty enumeration of the conditions of success would be incomplete did it omit the mention of sterling merit, genuine piety, and moral courage. Without these, human character, however amiable, is as shapeless as jelly, and as unstable as the arch whose keystones are dropping into the abyss beneath. Without principle, life must ever prove a failure; nothing else

can anchor it to the imperishable. Without piety, despair must environ the soul, for nothing else can unite it to the Eternal. Without heroism, real success is impossible, for nothing else can conquer selfishness. Possessing these, even though one may not be permitted to attain the objects for which he toils, the memory of manly efforts shall not be allowed to perish. His own heart shall find comfort as he thoughtfully whispers, "I have lost the ring, but the finger is here still."

Principle, piety, courage: three friends who ought never to be separated, and cannot be with impunity. The divorce is injurious to each; certainly the two former can scarcely exist without the latter. Accordingly, David in his old age earnestly admonishes Solomon, "Esto vir"—"Be a man." Not disposed to view courage as exclusively a natural gift, but convinced apparently that Heaven seldom pays a price for cowardice, he exhorts his son to employ his own strength as the most likely agency in securing Divine assistance. Assuredly, reason and experience tend to convince us that he who manfully attempts the seemingly impossible, as if relying exclusively upon his own exertions, but is nevertheless tremblingly conscious that success is dependent upon the inspiration which Heaven alone can impart, is more likely to prove himself a hero than those who wait for divine impulses, making prudence a euphonious name for cowardice and piety a cloak to conceal loss of faith in God. Divine strength to do valiantly for man's welfare and God's honor is rarely, if ever, acquired except by employing the energies we already possess. "To him that hath shall be given." "Be strong in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

Accordingly, we shall not greatly err, I apprehend, if we conclude that moral courage is in measure an acquisi-

tion. True, it comes slowly, but character is always slow in forming, especially that which commands respect. Like the human features chiselled in marble, it is the result of much labor, of countless strokes, some heavy, some light ; of the sledge-hammer's rough blows, of the chisel's gentle touch, of the polish which continued rubbing can alone impart. When once formed, however, it is like the outlines of the human face in granite, distinct and permanent.

If courage is in any degree attainable, then there are few, perhaps, who are not ready to concede that the exigencies of human existence loudly call for its cultivation. The Christian needs it, since his foes are so numerous and so intrepid that victory is frequently suspended upon boldness. Faint-heartedness is unlikely to overcome the assaults of sin. "Stout heart" gains the mastery. Satan is bold. Sin is courageous. Consequently, Christianity must also be or defeat is certain. Cromwell's Ironsides were accustomed to enter the battle shouting, "The Lord is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge." They were always victorious. The Christian's heroism should be like that of the famous Prince de Conde, of France, who when offered by his monarch the choice between three things—"To go to mass, to die, or to be imprisoned"—heroically replied, "I am perfectly resolved never to go to mass, as between the other two I leave the choice to your Majesty." If Luther dared to enter the Diet of Worms relying upon the justice of his cause and the protection of Israel's covenant-keeping God, assuredly the Christian, in this age and under any circumstances, however threatening, may confidently face the dangers which confront him.

Without doubt, genuine piety has a powerful tendency to develop heroism. Consequently, the history of God's

people furnishes many notable instances of courage—Moses standing in the door of his tent and shouting, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” Elijah facing Ahab—Nathan charging David with heinous crime—Daniel braving the fury of his enraged foes—Isaiah thrusting the arrows of divine truth into the seared consciences of his countrymen—John the Baptist declaring to Herod, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother Philip’s wife”—Christ confronting the Scribes and Pharisees and denominating them “whited sepulchres,” “servants of the devil,” “a generation of vipers,” “hypocrites”—Peter charging the Jews on the day of Pentecost with having murdered God’s incarnate Son—Paul standing before infuriated mobs to proclaim doctrines that were obnoxious to his hearers—Felicitas, a noble widow of Rome, stationing herself beside her seven martyred sons and exhorting them to prefer everlasting life to the transient pains of the perishable body—these, “of whom the world was not worthy,” have furnished testimony to the power of religion in imparting courage such as the good delight to honor.

In this large and honorable company a place is reserved for

ESTHER.

Who was Esther? with what personage known in secular history may we identify her? was she really a Persian queen, or only a favorite of Ahasuerus?

We have scriptural authority for affirming that her Jewish name was Hadassah, that she was the daughter of Abihail, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjamite; that her great-grandfather, Kish, was among the captives led away from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; that her father being dead she was the ward of Mordecai,

The strenuous efforts to identify her with some Persian queen known to history have so far proved fruitless. As there has been no Persian monarch from Astyages (B.C. 603) to Darius Ochus (B.C. 358) who has not been declared by some one or more eminent Christian writer to have been the husband of Esther, and as the Persian monarchs usually had several wives, and still more with whom marriage was a temporary arrangement, it becomes manifest that the field of discussion is by no means circumscribed. The three names about which the discussion has mainly concentrated, however, are Artissona, Atossa and Amestris. Having presented, as we apprehend, satisfactory evidence that Ahasuerus is Xerxes, the problem is limited to the question, is Esther Amestris? Scaliger thinks she is; but to this theory there are very grave objections. Amestris is said by Herodotus to have been the daughter of Otanes, a Persian, and to have become the wife of Xerxes before the Grecian war. Moreover, her sons accompanied Xerxes into Greece and arrived at manhood before the death of their father in the twentieth year of his reign. Esther was a Jewess, and did not enter the palace till after the monarch's return from Greece, in the seventh year of his reign. Besides, in character the two queens differed greatly.

We are accordingly compelled to acknowledge that the question is insoluble, for the present at least. We do not know whether scholarship can ever succeed in identifying her with any Persian queen known in profane history; indeed, we cannot affirm with certainty that she was the only queen at the time, nor even that she was a legitimate wife. The kings of Persia had, as a rule, several wives selected from the families of the nobility, and subordinate wives chosen at their own ca-

price. Consequently, Esther may have been, most probably was, a subordinate wife. ↴

In consenting to enter an eastern palace she may have been guilty of no ordinary sin. Those, however, who incline to this opinion should be careful to observe that the scriptural narrative does not represent her as a saint, but simply as the deliverer of her people ; besides, “ where the spider sucks poison, the bee sucks honey.” Moreover, the judgment entertained in reference to her conduct should be determined, in no slight measure, by the standard of the age in which she lived, not by that which Christianity has established in recent centuries, otherwise the conclusion reached may be somewhat uncharitable toward one who lived at a period when marriage, as a rule, was a mere matter of convenience. The sanctity of the married relation, which we deem one of the crowning glories of this age, was not then dreamed of. Even long subsequent to this, in the most illustrious days of Rome, married women, in order to escape the penalties inflicted by Roman law against certain forms of the social vice, deliberately enrolled their names, though they belonged to the families of the nobility, upon the official lists of those whose charms were temporarily bestowed in exchange for gold. Of the entire heathen world only Germany possessed any conception of marriage fidelity. (And yet some thoughtlessly affirm that the world is retrograding.) There would be some degree of uncharitableness in estimating the character of Esther by a standard entirely unknown to the age in which she lived. Even if she had entertained opinions so greatly in advance of her age, it is more than probable that any attempt to resist the royal edict would have been unavailing unless she was prepared to surrender life itself in obedience to her convictions. True, by an-

nouncing her nationality she might have defeated the hopes of becoming queen, it could not have delivered her from the hands of the king's servants, who were in search of fair maidens. Her beauty, like that of many another, was the fatal snare from which escape was impossible.

Perhaps it is proper to defend her conduct by assuming, as is entirely possible, that all whom the king received were wives. In this case her sin consisted in becoming one of the many who shared the king's affections, and her conduct in that case calls for charity, even though we may be disposed to condemn polygamy in terms of unmeasured severity. This at least is certain, she merits a measure of charity to which similar conduct in the present day would by no means be entitled. Possibly, she was entirely guiltless ; if not, let us at least remember that "a diamond with a flaw is better than a pebble without one."

The narrative furnishes one illustration of God's method of accomplishing his purposes. We might have been inclined to imagine that God would not employ heathen customs, and especially sinful practices, to elevate to the throne one who should rescue his chosen people. He did, however. Hence it is possible we may err when we hasten to the conclusion that because an agency is improper in itself, therefore it is in no way adapted to work out beneficial results. It may be an instrumentality which we are not at liberty to employ ; it does not follow, however, that "He who makes the wrath of man to praise him" may not turn it to account in forwarding his designs, compelling even wicked persons and their crimes to advance the interests of his cause, and to effect the deliverance of his chosen people.

Let us rejoice that polygamy with its many evils is

quite manifestly doomed to extinction. The Christian home with its precious legacy of purity, affection, kindness and forbearance, has rendered impossible the perpetuation of an institution which though intrenched in the sinful nature of man, cannot silence the moral convictions of this enlightened nineteenth century. "It takes a great many shovelfuls to bury the truth." The mothers and daughters of Christendom, if true to the teachings of Him who affirmed, "From the beginning it was not so," will ere long expel this remnant of barbarism, not only from Utah but as well from countries at present under the blight of Mohammedanism, and from lands where heathenism now holds sway. May the morning of this day soon dawn ! *

Ahasuerus set the royal crown upon Esther's head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Coronation, alas ! how frequently it has been the precursor of anguish such as only exalted station can experience ! A crown, won

* Human life resembles that of the animals in more respects than it is pleasant to consider, especially in love, courtship and marriage. Like human beings, some animals are monogamous ; some, polygamous ; some, polyandrous. Generally, among the birds at least, the courting is done by the males. In the spring, when the fields grow green and the flowers bloom, the birds return from the South—first the males, a few days later the females. In some shaded nook, the fittest place, a dozen or more may be seen hopping from branch to branch, chirping, singing and showing their fine feathers. One sings his love-song, beautiful as that of some love-sick Byron. This ended, another winks, gracefully skips about, exhibits his beautiful feathers and warbles, if possible, a still sweeter carol. Thus the great courting match goes on for hours, even for days. The best singers and the most beautifully feathered males secure their choice ; the rejected suitors take which they can. To a great extent the same is true of butterflies. They also are lovers of beautiful dress.

by duplicity or wrenched perforce from the hands of those whose rights have been invaded, may be set upon the brow amid pomp and pageantry, but no human device can long prevent it from chafing, and no manipulation can fit it so admirably to the head that it may not topple speedily to the ground, leaving the brain bewildered and the heart a target for the sharp arrows of embittered enemies. But Esther's crown, secured it may be by worth and conferred by the hand of him who humbles the great and exalts the lowly, was a source of joy to herself as well as a means of conferring benefits upon her people. Was it an earnest of an unfading diadem ?

The ceremonies connected with marriage, like the rites pertaining to religious worship, have differed widely, each country and each age having those peculiar to itself. One custom, however, that of feasting, has been common everywhere and in all ages. Hence no surprise is created by the announcement that "the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast." At this banquet the king granted special favors to the provinces—either a partial remittance of the taxes or pardon to certain classes of criminals. Moreover, with the munificent liberality for which he was noted, he gave gifts according to the state of the king.

Alas ! queenly station is no security against trouble. Three years later Esther and her people are sinking under a grievous calamity. Mordecai is in sackcloth. The Jews are by royal edict consigned to destruction. Shushan is perplexed. All eyes are turned toward Esther, wondering whether she can effect deliverance. From many a family-altar the incense of prayer is ascending to Heaven. Will the queen present herself before the monarch to plead for the life of her people ?

Her purpose is formed—"I will go in unto the king. . . if I perish, I perish." No feeble emotion, we may be certain, prompted this resolution. A trying emergency is upon her. Only one method of deliverance seems available. God is quite manifestly indicating the course she is to pursue. She is thoroughly in earnest. She must act or she must die. On the third day of the fasting she puts on her royal apparel and stands in the inner court. How many, prompted by vanity, have laboriously decked the person in fading finery! Others, not a few, with whom costly garments and glittering jewels are regarded as gewgaws, have nevertheless employed them as the means of captivating hearts with which their own were wedded. Some, like Esther, may be so circumstanced that the interest of others may be best subserved and the cause of God most promoted by employing beauty of dress as a means to an end. It is therefore evident that though one may be guilty of excess in dress and of great sin in paying more regard to the adornment of the body than to the cultivation of Christian graces, nevertheless the apparel which social station demands, though costly, may deck an humble heart and adorn modest worth; nay, may greatly aid the cause of true piety by enhancing personal influence. Dress is an index of character. Consequently, inattention thereto may indicate lack of self-respect or the absence of a due regard to the tastes and feelings of others. A good man is none the worse for being in a good coat. A becoming regard to neat attire may indicate the possession of inward qualities which entitle one to universal respect. A bad man is none the better for being clad in tattered garments. Though a coat that is unpaid for is seldom becoming, the coat which honest industry has purchased may adorn the wearer even

though of the finest texture. May every son of toil have a good coat and a happy heart within it ; a good dinner and a good appetite to eat it ; a good character and a cheerful home in which to display it. With no possession save character one may be rich. "A handful of good life is worth a bushel of sovereigns." A man of character is always a man of consequence in the world.

Though sadness was in the queen's heart, her countenance may have been lighted up with cheerfulness. This, it would seem, was necessary to success.

"The weapon that no enemy can parry
Is a bold and cheerful spirit."

A regard to others' happiness, and the hope of securing benefits which we ardently covet, plead with us, perhaps, to imprison despondency in our own souls, permitting joy, or at least quiet cheerfulness, to irradiate the countenance. How frequently by the bedside of the dying is the husband or wife, the parent or child, called upon to manifest a cheerful disposition though grief is flooding the soul ! Selfishness may be inclined to give vent to tears ; self-sacrifice represses feeling, having regard to the happiness of one whose comfort it shall not long be permitted to enhance.

As upon Esther devolved the arduous task of bringing the monarch to feel as she felt and to think as she thought, she must first enter into his feelings that she may the more readily bring his emotions into sympathy with her own. She must heed the admonition.

"Speak sober truth with smiling lips,
The bitter wrap in sweetness."

Thus will she unseal the fountain of affection ; thus subdue an imperious will ; thus successfully supplant

the influence of Haman, causing her husband to condemn one whom now he admires.

“Every day in a person’s life is a leaf in his history.” This day in the life of Esther is a leaf containing a record of more than ordinary interest—an account of heroic conduct. This is evident, since her conduct under the most trying circumstances was not at variance with her convictions of duty. It is somewhat depressing to observe how seldom acknowledged duty results in acts performed, especially if they are not likely to promote personal ends. In such instances the ear is quite apt to become deaf to the voice of conscience and the mind filled with considerations which palsy energy, causing the will to go limping between two opinions, “to good and evil equal bent; half a devil, half a saint.” But Esther promptly answered the calls of duty. She heroically pursued the path apparently marked out by an unseen hand. It was a way enshrouded in darkness, encircled by difficulties, strewn with sharp stones over which with bleeding feet she must wearily journey forward to victory or death. Not sustained by the presence of those who might cheer her heart and stimulate her courage, she must perform her act of heroism where none could witness it, though thousands might be subsequently benefited thereby. Alas! how few there are who can be heroic in solitude; who can face duty when no eye save the omniscient witnesses their mastery over self and perhaps over Satanic influence as well! Moreover, in Esther’s case there was a torturing uncertainty in reference to the reception that awaited her, a tantalizing conviction that she could do little more than station herself between an uncontrollable will and the apparently certain doom that hung over her kindred. It is easy to conceive that the results which

seemed to depend upon the issue of the hour might have nerved the human heart to strike vigorous blows for deliverance, but it evidently required a higher degree of courage to stand unmoved and simply await a decision which should inspire hope or consign to ignominy, perhaps to death. Great indeed is the heroism which is capable of marching sword in hand into a position where death is imminent; greater still is that heroism which is equal to the task of standing to await the approach of the grim monster. In Esther's case the very magnitude of the issue was fitted to arouse activity, but her heroism must assume the form of passivity. The affections of the king may be alienated from her. Haman's malign influence may be all potent, and his haughty will resistless. She can only stand, commanding her own emotions, and heroically await issues which she can have little influence in determining.

In further proof of courage, observe that Esther attempts the seemingly impossible. She endeavors by the mere weight of personal influence to reverse the decrees of an empire that prides itself in infallibility—whose laws are unalterable. It is one of the characteristics of courage to deem nothing impossible unless reason pronounces it contrary to nature's laws. "Dare-All" generally conquers all. He who is incessantly shouting "Lions in the way" is seldom permitted to perceive that they are chained and harmless.

Nor does this instance of heroism appear less conspicuous when we note that in the hour of trial Esther redeemed the promise given in the season of religious devotion. Alas! how many covenants voluntarily subscribed to at the altar of God in the trembling hope of an eternal reward have been broken in the face of temptation! How many vows, assumed when the soul was

imploing Divine assistance, have been subsequently disregarded ! Promises have been recorded before God ; have they, like Esther's, been redeemed in the face of self-sacrifice ?

Did it require no more than ordinary courage to pursue the path of duty at the risk of surrendering wealth, happiness and honorable station ? Let those answer who have found themselves confronted with the choice between present advantages, glittering, numerous, certain, and the shadowy hopes which the performance of an unpleasant duty held out in the remote future. To exchange acquired advantages for fleeting phantoms, to hazard everything at the call of an inward monitor, whose suggestions bear so many and such varied interpretations, demands a remarkable degree of courage, one to which only strong faith can prompt. And when we come to note the fact that Esther was prepared to surrender life itself in an attempt to avert disaster from those who were in no circumstances to confer either honor on her memory or substantial benefits on her surviving friends, we are forced to concede that the heroism she manifested was of a type rare on earth.

We should be recreant to our duty did we close without reminding you that obedience to obligation brings its own reward, the consciousness of duty done, a sense of Divine approbation, the conviction that self-sacrifice must necessarily prove beneficial to humanity, the hope that through the pathway of trial the bleeding feet are bearing the sad heart forward to eternal cheerfulness, where the rewards of self-denial shall be as ample as they are inspiring. Many and cogent reasons may have recommended inaction on the part of Esther ; motives more numerous and more potential induced her to endanger

everything in the hope of becoming the deliverer of her people.

Who will presume to deny that heroism is one of the necessities of the nineteenth century? It is needed in the pulpit, oh, how greatly; in the family, in the market-place, in our courts where the penalties of law are inflicted, in the halls of legislation, in the intercourse of endeared friendship, in the mission field, in the upholstered sanctuary where religion is assumed as a cloak to conceal moral rottenness—everywhere. The cry of the church, as she is battling against evils that are imperilling immortal souls, is, “More heroism.” Oh, for more of the spirit of Him who sacrificed Himself for man!

In conclusion: 1. If Esther put on her royal apparel to appear before the Persian king, let us remember that to secure the favor of our Sovereign we need to be “clothed with humility.” “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” “He has respect to the lowly.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” “Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

2. A certain measure of courage is indispensable to salvation. We must face the Divine Throne, and after securing the divine favor—recognition from the King of kings—must go hence to conquer many spiritual enemies ere we can enter the company of the ransomed, “those

who have come out of great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

3. Let us not fail to observe that the union of courage and prudence is as necessary in the present day as it was in Esther's time. Ours may be an humble sphere in which we are called to labor for Christianity. Let us ennoble it by heroism. Our lives, though centred in the sphere of common duties, may be made to possess grandeur by the simple display of those qualities which are as instrumental in conferring blessings upon humanity as they are in enhancing the honor of their possessor. That we may prosecute Christian enterprise with success, let us “take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men,” endeavoring in all sincerity to blend discretion and heroism.

VI.

THE REWARD OF HEROISM.

“ Not so hopeless, drooping spirit ;
Yon clouds at length will rise ;
And, beyond them, in the distance,
Spreads a realm of sunny skies.
God’s promise standeth fast,
And the glory breaks at last ;
Peace is rising out of strife,
Death is dying into life ;
Up springs the eternal sun ;
Heaven and earth will soon be one.”

HORATIUS BONAR.

THE deed is done : Esther has presented herself unbidden before Ahasuerus. Is there sufficient justice in the court, in the Persian empire, in the universe, to recompense her heroism ?

Life, now and always, is a representation of the old fable of the Sphinx, who sitting by the roadside propounded a riddle, which the passer-by must answer or be destroyed : “ There is beauty in nature, and there is ugliness also. There is goodness, but it has everywhere its background of wickedness—indeed, the two intermingle in a manner that is utterly inexplicable. Justice has her throne on earth ; injustice nevertheless is often regnant, her sway seemingly almost universal and her foundations apparently unmoved and immovable. Which shall ultimately triumph ? ” Some, whose vision seldom penetrates beyond the semblance of things, hastily answer,

“Injustice.” Others, fixing their faith on eternal verities, respond, “Justice is an irreversible law, and her final victory is assured.” Wrong may win a temporary triumph and succeed to appearances in overwhelming right, but justice, though sometimes tardy, never fails sooner or later in vindicating her authority.

This fact is graven so deeply on man’s soul that the thoughtful of every age, every nation, every degree of culture, every religious faith—Greeks, Romans, Saxons, Bushmen, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Brahmins, Jews, Christians, and even those whose faith has frozen into superstition—agree in affirming, “In the heart of the universe justice reigns and forever must reign.”

True, in the Niagaras over which men plunge and nations perish, the rewards of virtue are inexplicably jumbled with the penalties of injustice, as if there was no law except that of endless confusion. Wait a little. The clouds will clear away. The roar will cease or the ear will become accustomed to it. Then, lo, it will be manifest that all the while justice was noiselessly working out her beneficent results. Men, for a time, may be content with the empty husks. They will not feed contentedly upon them forever. Down deep in the human heart there is an abiding love of right, and a degree of loyalty thereto which is simply ineradicable. “Heaven and earth may fight in vain against a dunce,” but even a dunce will be forced to learn that forces celestial unite with agencies terrestrial in one vigorous, prolonged effort to maintain the ascendancy of moral rectitude.

Falsehood and wrong may have their day, sometimes painfully protracted, but truth and right will ultimately obscure their tinselled lustre and will continue to shed their mild radiance over the grave of their once blatant rivals. The light may be invisible except to the noble

few, the resistless power inappreciable save by the pure in soul, but their grace and beauty are so transcendent and their power so potent that discovering right is loving it, and loving it is obeying it. A pop-gun is a pop-gun though half the world, nay, though all the inhabitants of the planets that dot the fields of immensity united in pronouncing it the echo of eternity. Error could not continue forever though it found a voice in every pulpit, an advocate on every platform, an apologist in every author, and an orator in every social circle. Truth is eternally young ; error soon becomes decrepit. Reality is deathless ; shams are short-lived, and around their tombs few mourners assemble. Justice is forever marching forward to the conquest of the world ; injustice is weariedly collecting her shattered forces and slinking away into endless oblivion.

As a confirmation of the fact that an unseen hand is incessantly making preparation for the punishment of wrong and the establishment of right, observe—

1. Esther finds favor in the eyes of the king. The faith which no discouragements can overcome and the heroism which no dangers can affright are quite certain to receive their reward. Accordingly, improbable as it may have appeared to an indifferent observer, the queen, by her presence, revived in the monarch's heart the affection which under the malicious influence of a court favorite was rapidly turning to coldness, if not indeed to hatred. Courage has won its prize. Cowardice would have left her pining in obscurity or sinking down under the ever-accumulating weight of woes which to appearances no human heart could avert ; meanwhile, in the ever-deepening gloom of settled despondency, the torturing sense of helplessness would have stimulated a morbid imagination to paint weird pictures on the curtain of

futurity, rendering life an unrelieved torture and extinguishing hope. But the heroic determination to face the difficulties that environed her and the abiding conviction that justice was not yet entirely banished even from a Persian court, secured the much-coveted recompense, the favor of one upon whose will was suspended the happiness and even the lives of hundreds, perhaps of thousands.

Thus, in this world where shams are more numerous than realities, injustice more defiant than justice, wrong more active than right, malignity quite often more courageous than benevolence, heroic adherence to one's convictions and self-sacrifice in the interests of humanity are certain, sooner or later, to receive the approbation of "the King of kings;" nay, they have always His approval, and are destined to receive such ultimate vindication as shall make it apparent to all that the balances of rectitude are held in the hand of Omniscience. Let those, therefore, who are struggling to resist the tides of immorality take heart. Let those who are toiling for the overthrow of formal worship labor on in faith and patience. The world is advancing. Society is becoming more moral, more religious. Abominations are slinking into obscurity. Christian heroism is massing her forces for one final desperate struggle with the powers of evil. When God's true servants, few though they may be in comparison with their foes, shall have formed the resolution to conquer for God or perish in the noble endeavor, they shall receive the tokens of his eternal favor. Meanwhile, though a certain measure of sadness may chill the heart, they are encouraged in the belief that right must ultimately triumph.

Esther's fears are disappointed—her anxious preparations are richly rewarded. "The king's heart is in the

hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water." Accordingly, "the king held out the golden sceptre that was in his hand." The hour of darkness has passed. "So Esther drew near and touched the top of the sceptre." All else will now follow. Haman's foul scheme will be blasted. The church will be rescued. The bloody edict will be rendered nugatory, if not reversed. The hostility of the enemy will be henceforth powerless. The rewards of heroism how speedy—how greatly they transcend the most that hope dares to anticipate!

The chief incidents in this scene how frequently are they enacted—not indeed beneath the dazzling splendor of an earthly throne, but in sacred retirement as the sinner with a burdened soul presents himself at the footstool of Heaven's court. Upon his innermost conscience is burned the conviction that an irresistible law has consigned him to a death whose agonies no Miltonic imagination can adequately portray. Sadness has nearly overwhelmed him. In deep emotion he has formed his purpose, "I will go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish." In the presence of royalty he has stood with bowed head, speechless, hoping for mercy. Lo, he obtained what he could scarcely induce himself to expect, only at best faintly to hope for, merciful recognition from the King Almighty. His courage is rewarded far beyond his most ardent expectations. The past is forgiven. The present is assurance of acceptance. The future is painted in the hues of hope, without which man is perhaps the most miserable of all God's creatures.

Hope,

"The beauteous sun
That colors all it shines upon,
The beacon of life's stormy sea,
The star of immortality."

Tremblingly he extends his hand to touch the sceptre of the King Eternal. Despair gives place to hope. Accepted, he has an abiding conviction that all else will follow, the conquest of his spiritual foes, the deliverance of his soul, a reversal of the decree which once seemed an adamant wall, conquest over the last enemy, triumphant entrance into the mansion beautiful within the gates of the New Jerusalem.

2. Esther receives the promise that her petition shall be granted. "What is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom." A new token of royal favor, the petition is virtually granted before it is preferred. Surely lips which fear has sealed may now open, disclosing her heart's desire. As she had the nerve to present herself before the king without encouragement, she may proffer her petition, not impelled by the pressure of necessity, but wooed by the assurance that her petitions shall be granted.

We are scarcely justified in concealing the fact that the words, "to the half of the kingdom," are not to be understood literally. Being a form of expression common in oriental courts, it was no doubt designed to express affectionate regard, and to encourage the receiver in the confident expectation that any reasonable request should be granted, not strictly, however, "to the half of the kingdom."

Is not every one who sincerely implores favors from the King of kings justified in believing that his petition is virtually granted already — especially when his request is for that which will conduce to man's welfare, the promotion of God's cause and the deliverance of his struggling church? Does he not receive every possible encouragement to make known his requests unto God? Impelled by a sense of need he comes to his Maker bur-

dened with petitions which his faith scarcely permits him to believe will be granted ; lo, a voice whispers, “ Ask and it shall be given thee.” “ What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

Josephus, in painting this scene, represents Esther as falling down in a swoon ; the king as leaping from his throne, taking her in his arms, embracing her and speaking words of comfort. This, quite manifestly, is a shading which fancy has given ; but are we not at liberty to interpret the Saviour’s beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son as intimating that our Heavenly Father will welcome the returning sinner, receive him upon his bosom and speak words of encouragement, of love and of comfort ? The very court of the invisible King is represented as echoing glad rejoicings.

Surely, heroism has its rewards. Being that which God honors and man applauds, it generally receives a promise that the objects for which it is struggling shall be realized. Perhaps there is no one trait of character which is more likely to command general respect than moral courage, especially when it manifests itself, not in violent attacks upon others, but in the calm determination to suffer anything, even death itself, sooner than see injustice clothed with the authority of irreversible law, or practices prevalent which ultimately bring dishonor upon religion, if indeed they do not cause it to become formality, a burden to society, a snare to its advocates, and a thing of scorn to the heroic.

It would be a grave mistake, however, to suppose that true courage is devoid of prudence. Simple fearlessness does not constitute the essential element of that manliness which all admire, some enthusiastically. Aimless sacrifice no one is justified in making, nor is it worthy of

commendation. Our Lord, heroic as he was, escaped from the hands of his enemies, evidently considering it the dictate of prudence to preserve his life till his teachings were completed and then surrender it—not however to the fury of an ignoble mob in Galilee, but on the cross in Jerusalem and under condemnation of the highest ecclesiastical authority. Self-sacrifice attains sublimity only when discretion has marked its course. The test of manliness is loyalty to truth, but such loyalty does not conflict with the exercise of good judgment. Prudence is always commendable, unless excessive or pursued at the cost of principle ; then it becomes imprudence in inexcusable form.

Why did not the Persian queen immediately comply with her husband's request and state her desire ? Was she suddenly seized with fear ? Did the unexpected favor and the unlooked-for promise divert her attention from the main purpose ? Having received tokens of the monarch's affection, is she resolved calmly to await the issue, hoping all may eventuate well ? Nay ; but calm judgment admonishes her to await a more convenient opportunity. The success of her suit may be hazarded by too great precipitancy. The monarch is evidently loyal to her now, but she has as yet no evidence that he will remain so were she to attempt the overthrow of Haman's schemes, or the reversal of a royal edict. She must walk softly and observe narrowly in which direction the next step should be taken. To control another's will, and especially that of a determined husband, adroitness is necessary as well as fearlessness. He leads best who seems to follow. To make known a request before due preparation is made to secure the coveted answer is unwise. If possible a strong will should not be permitted to reach a decision—certainly should not be goaded to it

—till the convenient time arrives. The decision once reached is quite likely to become unalterable, even though it may be unreasonable, since consistency and sometimes stubbornness will plead powerfully against a reversal of judgment. Consequently, Esther acted wisely, as we apprehend, in deferring her main petition and simply inviting the king and Haman to a banquet. If the wife knows not how to manage her husband, who does? Believing that “there is a time to every purpose,” she prudently conceals her desire, preferring to allow her own partially concealed agitation to produce its natural effect upon the monarch’s active imagination. Moreover, the respect she therein manifests for him will tend in no slight measure to pave the way for the attainment of her purpose. He will come by slow degrees to perceive that she designs to make no ordinary request, and sympathy will induce him to form the determination of gratifying her wishes as far as circumstances will permit. Reluctance to make known our desires, if discreetly managed, tends powerfully to improve the chances of success, particularly in matters depending entirely upon the will of another. Besides, the lapse of time will afford a better opportunity for ascertaining the feelings of the king toward Haman. The extension of an invitation to the prime-minister will honor him, will flatter the monarch and will furnish Esther the opportunity of facing her enemy and conquering him in the presence of one upon whose decision everything is suspended. She will herself witness the decision rendered, and so will not be at the mercy of court sycophants, who might make a report colored by their own feelings and predilections.

Would that Christians, imitating the example of Esther, could patiently wait on the Lord. The world is progressing. Man is subduing its wastes, levelling its moun-

tains, filling its valleys, draining pestilential swamps, building cities, and constructing railways along which unwearied steeds journey day and night ; he is taking petroleum from the earth to cheer the gloom of night, coal with which to mitigate the rigors of winter, and iron from which to manufacture machinery, increasing the comforts of home and facilitating the peaceful conquests of commerce ; as by a magician's wand he is evoking the invisible forces of nature and rendering them subservient to the accomplishment of his purposes ; is compelling the lightning to convey his messages, not merely across continents, but even beneath the depths of the ocean ; is disarming the thunders of their terror and inducing the coming storm to herald its approach ;* is scattering

* The marvellous discoveries in science and their employment in conferring benefits upon the human family remind us of an Arabian legend, according to which a strange fortune attended one of the genii. The monster, "as tall as a mountain and as strong as an earthquake," once amused himself by attempting to squeeze his body into an enchanted bottle. Succeeding, suddenly the mouth closed and he was effectually confined. Several thousand years afterward, a man, while ploughing, turned up this bottle. "Let me out—let me out," said a voice from within. Now, thought the ploughman, I have a prize, a confined genius. Thinking to drive a sharp bargain, he exclaimed, "Can't do it—can't do it." "I will give anything you ask," said the prisoner. "Will you take away this great mountain between me and the city ? Will you turn my hut into a palace ? Will you fill it with gold and precious stones ?" "Yes, I will. By all that is sacred to the Prophet, to Alcoran and to Allah, I will." Open went the spring-cap. Swift as lightning, out rushed a blue flame, which, ascending high as Mount Sinai, assumed the vapory form of a colossal giant. Taking up the mountain in his hand he threw it into an adjacent valley. Snatching the little hut, he threw it into the air, exclaiming, "Come down great—come down beautiful." Instantaneously the parting clouds revealed the minarets

gems of literature as noiselessly and as profusely as the autumn forest strews its leaves of variegated hues ; is educating the masses ; is sowing the seeds of civilization in lands where savagery has held sway from time immemorial ; is shedding the blessings of Christianity where superstition for untold centuries has been crushing the spiritual life from its deluded victims ; is establishing churches on sites which once reeked with the blood of human sacrifices ; is inaugurating missions in lands formerly full of the habitations of cruelty ; is scattering the rays of divine truth and erecting beacon-lights upon shores hitherto wrapped in almost impenetrable darkness ; is marshalling a corps of zealous Christian workers who are self-sacrificingly engaged in determined efforts to remove every form of evil, physical, moral, social, religious. Mankind is becoming more moral, more reasonable, more conscientious, more intelligently pious. The hill-tops are beginning to gleam in the effulgence of a more glorious era. Why then should the servants of our King go continuously with downcast heads ? The world is yet to be conquered for God. The day begins to dawn. Wait patiently, O Christian. The struggle is indeed intense. The foes are certainly numerous. One

and towers and walls of a gorgeous palace, fit for the dwelling-place of Mohammed himself. From a palm-tree standing at the door, the genius plucked a leaf, and writing strange characters thereon, tore it into bits and puffed the fragments away in all directions. Immediately, long lines of slaves were seen entering the palace, each bending under a sack of gold and precious stones. Depositing the sack on the floor he laid himself by its side and became a heap of jewels. Soon from floor to ceiling the palace was full. "Come and see," said the genius. Lo, gold, and diamonds, and amethysts, and jaspers filled every apartment.

This fairy tale seems little more wonderful than the feats accomplished by modern science.

year may not show cheering evidence of the coming victory. We scarcely affirm too much, however, when we hazard the prediction that a continuance of the present rate of progress will plant Christianity, ere the close of another century, in every nation and will give potency to those institutions which have proved marvellously efficient in elevating humanity. When an unperverted gospel shall be preached fearlessly and pointedly in every community, far-reaching results must ensue. "He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The conduct of Esther rendered the monarch quite as anxious to ascertain her wishes as she once was to know his. At the banquet he is the first to introduce the subject. He has become the one who desires a favor. "What is thy petition?" Esther, who possesses a rare measure of self-possession, adroitly evades the question by gracefully saying, "If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for him, and I will do to-morrow as the king has said." "Speech is silver; silence, golden." "The eloquence of silence has never been written down." "He who says what he likes shall hear what he does not like." Esther's cautious concealment of the nature of her request cannot fail to convince the king that she designs to ask a boon which will tax his liberality to the utmost. Accordingly, when it shall be subsequently stated, he will be the better prepared to grant it; possibly it may appear in his eyes a less serious sacrifice than he anticipated. Moreover, besides determining whether she has sufficient influence to secure her request, she will by obtaining his consent to attend a second banquet lay him under renewed obligations to

comply with her wishes. Meanwhile, purposes will ripen and a fitting opportunity will occur for disclosing the secret. Upon herself also the effect of uncertainty will be beneficial. As anything can be borne more easily than good fortune, she is qualifying herself to bear prosperity by the uncomplaining endurance of adversity.

She has in fact already conquered the heart of the fickle king and even subdued his imperious will. He now asks a favor from her. Ere Alexander had conquered his way to that eminence which produced the conviction that it was futile to resist his will, he was under the necessity of requesting favors; but as soon as he had given proof of possessing an unconquerable determination, others solicited favors from him. Now that Ahasuerus has become a suppliant, he is virtually acknowledging that he is conquered; is confessing that Persia's king, though an absolute monarch, is under the influence of a woman.

If in Esther's case courage made her aims an object of prime importance to the monarch, we need not marvel that heroism renders the enemies of Christianity desirous of ascertaining the designs of those whom prudence has taught them to respect. The world is always anxious to know what the courageous man intends to do. He represents power, and power commands respect—sometimes produces a conviction of the hopelessness of attempting resistance.

It will be a glorious day for Christianity when Christian people, manifesting more courage than the enemies of the truth, shall be kindly but perseveringly aggressive. When error becomes bolder than truth, and wickedness more courageous than goodness, religion exhibits the anomaly of apologizing for an existence, and spends her energies in defending her own position when she should

be massing her forces for an onward movement and compelling her foes to inquire, what are her purposes? Religion is nearing a triumph when her enemies have all they can do to defend themselves; when they have no unemployed forces with which to assail those whose manliness they have found it prudent not to despise.

The Christian, whose convictions are maturely formed, firmly established, boldly announced and kindly maintained, is the person whose purposes the world desires to know. It has little interest in knowing the wishes of cowardice—these it can thwart if deemed desirable; but against plans which have the backing of perseverance it is always impolitic to battle. A reputation for courage renders victory easy; a reputation for cowardice often precludes the possibility of triumph, even when energies are employed which under the leadership of manliness would have insured success.

4. Esther's conduct prompted Haman to a fresh act of indiscretion. Going forth from the banquet greatly elated—prosperity having intoxicated him—he is disqualified for enduring the sneers of the world, and is left an easy victim of his own fiery temper; as Mordecai still refuses to bow, Haman's indignation is fanned into an uncontrollable fury. Does a porter presume to insult one who has been honored by being permitted to feast in the private apartments of the royal palace? Pride is wounded; ambition eclipsed; happiness marred. His honors seem empty. Of what worth are they if their splendor does not induce a menial to do him reverence? Thus, generally, with the happiness of the world—it is ever meeting with that which causes it to turn into bitterness. From the hill-tops of satisfaction it steps forth to find some contemptible object which instantaneously con-

verts self-complacency into a tempest of indignation. Prudent is the counsel of the sage :

“ Bear prosperity, adversity will bear itself.
Everything can be borne except good fortune.”

Heroism, like conservatism, has its rewards ; among these, not the least is the fact that it tempts enmity to the commission of new acts of indiscretion. Becoming indignant, Haman cannot await the tardy attainment of his purposes, and in his frenzy to accelerate the consummation of his villainies, hastens the footsteps of avenging justice. In every contest we act wisely in awaiting the issue before we make up our final judgment. The outcome will be likely to prove that each combatant has prospered according to the measure of right embodied in his cause. Let us therefore wait ; perhaps he who seems successful now may draw down upon himself destruction. Justice erected the pillars which sustain her throne, erected them ere the foundations of the earth were laid, or the mountains were brought forth. Consequently, her sway shall endure after the heavens are rolled together as a scroll and the elements melt with fervent heat. Forth from eternity she came, and into eternity she shall enter. Having therefore endless duration in which to visit penalties upon wickedness, she can afford to move with slow and noiseless step. But injustice, being in its nature evanescent, hastens to consummate its madness, and in its impetuosity perpetuates new follies and so shortens existence.

Does an adamant wall confront the Christian ? Are the evils which he is attempting to eradicate becoming more widely prevalent, more deeply rooted and more openly defiant ? Has he, like Esther, faced them and shown himself ready to perish rather than permit their

continuance? Do they still maintain their ascendancy while prostrate thousands are doing them reverence? With faith in God's justice let him wait unmurmuringly. Prosperity, ere long, may embolden the wicked to adopt measures which will overwhelm them in an unexpected hour. Indignant because others will not surrender convictions, or because goodness will not bow the knee, they may essay the task of extinguishing religion, thereby procuring discomfiture at the hour they are anticipating victory. Right may perhaps be defeated at each successive entrenchment till the last; there, victory is assured.

Esther's delay, which impelled her enemy to the last act in his drama of wickedness, might have proved unavailing except for the sensitiveness of Haman. His haughtiness consummated his ruin.

"The gods are just, and of our vices
Make instruments to scourge us."

Haman's littleness rendered him indignant at a slight which greatness would have passed without observing, or at least without mentioning. His conduct evinces a consciousness of the weakness of his cause. If his honors rest on merit and his cause is founded in right, the slight of an humble Jew cannot endanger them. Evidently, he has little confidence in the integrity of his own purposes. He fears, apparently, that one subject may disclose their emptiness and by turning all eyes in the same direction may convert public favor into bitterness. The consciousness of rectitude renders one nearly unconquerable.

Of Esther we may truthfully say :

"Alone her task was wrought,
Alone the battle fought ;

Through that long strife her constant hope was stayed
On God alone, nor looked for other aid."

To be heroes is easy, since "the grandest courage of all is the every-day courage of doing duty." It is fidelity in ordinary life that opens to us avenues leading to Calvary, and at the same time prepares us for enduring the final tests of heroism.

The rewards of adherence to Christian principle how inestimable ! He who while on earth "dares do all that becomes a man," shall in heaven enjoy all of which human nature is capable. Sharing in the struggles of God's people, he shall enter upon the joys of the ransomed. Stooping to conquer, he shall rise to rejoice evermore.

VII.

MALICE PROCURING HUMILIATION.

“ Oh, learn that it is only by the lowly
The paths of peace are trod ;
If thou wouldst keep thy garments white and holy,
Walk humbly with thy God.
The dew that never wets the flinty mountain
Falls in the valley free ;
Bright verdure fringes the small desert fountain,
But barren sand the sea.”

THE favor shown to Haman resulted in intensifying his haughtiness. Accordingly, on his way home he was angered by Mordecai's refusal to accord him due respect. With a degree of self-possession, which in his case was a little remarkable, he affects ignorance of the insult, and hastening home assembles his friends. To them and to his injudicious wife, Zeresh, he communicates intelligence of the honor he has received in being the only guest at the royal banquet ; moreover he has an invitation for the morrow. A recital of the evidences of royal favor, accompanied as it was by an account of his riches, his children and his increasing greatness, raises his spirits to an unusual exhilaration. Alas ! it awakens remembrance of the incidents of the preceding hour, and prompts the abrupt exclamation, “ All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate.” Glory and honor are empty bubbles, if a servant may treat me with contempt.

Perceiving his chagrin, Zeresh, with the approval of the assembled friends, recommends the erection of a gallows, and an application to the king for authority to execute the contumacious Jew thereon. "Then," said she, "go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet." Pleased with the suggestion, Haman gives orders for the erection of the scaffold. The purpose formed, his spirit revives.

How he passed the night, whether in slumber or in preparation for the issues of the morrow, we know not; but Providence, whose sleepless eye is ever watching the doings of individuals as well as the affairs of nations, so orders it that Ahasuerus tosses to and fro upon a wearied bed. In the hope of wooing "nature's sweet restorer," he orders the book of the Chronicles of the Kings to be read in his hearing. A seeming chance guides the reader to that portion which contains an account of the conspiracy of Bigthan and Teresh. Hearing of the loyalty of an humble Jew, he interrupts the reader to inquire, "What honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?" Receiving the response, "There is nothing done for him," the monarch's sense of gratitude prompts him to make an endeavor to atone for the neglect. Morning having now arrived, he asks, "Who is in the court?" Haman is there, anxiously awaiting an opportunity to secure the royal consent to Mordecai's execution, that so the work of vengeance may be complete ere the hour arrives when he shall again present himself at the queen's banquet. To the assertion, "Haman standeth in the court," the monarch makes reply, "Let him come in." Ere the prime-minister can frame his petition into becoming language, the king asks, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" Haman, as was perhaps natural, imagines himself the

person who is to receive tokens of royal generosity. Accordingly, he recommends the highest honors which his imagination can suggest. Let the royal apparel be brought, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown-royal which is set upon his head. Let these be delivered to one of the most noble princes, that he may array the king's favorite withal and bring him on horse-back through the street of the city, heralding his triumphant progress with the proclamation, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor." Immediately the order is given, "Make haste, do even so to Mordecai, the Jew."

The mandate must be obeyed. Haman, drinking the dregs of humiliation, is forced to confer honors on one for whose death he came to petition and toward whom he feels an intensity of hatred such as only race-prejudice can produce. Lo, Mordecai is escorted through the city by one who hoped to be engaged in superintending his execution. The pageant over, Mordecai returns to the gate as humble as before, and apparently as content with his lowly station. Haman, filled with chagrin, hastens homeward with covered head. To his wife and friends he recounts the humiliating incidents of the day. Where he hopes to meet encouragement and to receive inspiration for the endurance of coming adversities, he incurs repulse. His wise men, and his wife also, confirm the forebodings of his conscience as they predict, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." Poor comforters.

This stirring narrative furnishes a fruitful theme : malice enduring anguish which it has prepared for another. Four topics invite attention :

1. Malice preparing a beverage of grief.

2. Providence fixing a time when the draught shall be taken.

3. Necessity pressing the cup to the lips.

4. Conscience producing apprehensions of greater calamities.

1. Such is the nature of malice as to leave little cause for surprise that an avenging Nemesis should visit penalties upon it in such form as to point unmistakably to the preparations made for another's humiliation. The mind in which malevolent feelings have gained ascendancy is so far Satanic that few would be disposed to deny that retributive justice is on the right track when engaged in giving efficacy to those agencies which eventually compel the malevolent person to drink the cup which he has been pressing upon another. An inordinate love of money may render men selfish ; lust may convert them into brutes ; impiety may leave them leafless trunks inviting the lightning of Divine vengeance ; malice transforms them into demons. It is to be expected, therefore, that since justice occupies the throne, malevolence will be compelled to perceive that the humiliation which it was preparing for another will be presented to its own lips. The effort to refrain from the manifestation of this fiendish spirit, the feeling still nestling in the heart, will be, as in Haman's case, only a temporary check resulting in intensifying a hatred which is certain to burst forth and involve its victim in calamities which he was preparing for another. Anger suddenly aroused and permitted to exhibit itself in violent language is sad enough ; but anger repressed till it becomes settled malice, incessantly devising new methods of injuring one who is scarcely suspicious of its existence, is a temper so detestable that we are not surprised in finding it injures the possessor more than it does the person toward whom it is directed. If

Haman for the slight offered is to become angry, it were better for him to give immediate expression to his feelings, and subsequently treat Mordecai with contempt if he cannot forgive him ; but to repress the manifestations of enmity while continuing to harbor the feeling is to render his own life miserable and to insure an accumulation of resentment which must one day break through all the barriers of propriety, and in its attempt to injure Mordecai will ruin Haman. Let us not fail to perceive that whatever may be the advantages of well-regulated anger, malice is certain to injure him who indulges it, forcibly exemplifying the truth of the scriptural assertion, " As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him ; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him ; as he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones."

Nor was repression of feeling the only agency in augmenting Haman's malice, and so intensifying the anguish he ultimately endured. Going home he inflames his friends with the same degree of animosity, thereby increasing his own and multiplying the difficulties of reconciliation by committing himself to measures of revenge. If angry feelings exist toward another, it is honorable to avow them in his presence, but prudence generally dictates their concealment from others. The disposition to tarnish the reputation of another is so Satanic that there are few who do not condemn its possessor ; and these few may innocently injure the one whom they profess to defend, if they do not " fool him to the top of his bent," for the purpose of benefiting themselves.

A moment's reflection will suffice to convince us that Haman's second mistake, like his first, tended to prepare the way for his own humiliation, and for the exaltation of

him whom he desired to destroy. Few things are more impolitic than a malicious attempt to injure another. It almost invariably eventuates in self-injury. "Curses, like chickens, generally come home to roost." The boasting in which he indulged—recounting in a vainglorious spirit the extent of his riches, the number of his children, the honors heaped upon him—tended in no slight measure to nurse the angry feelings which had already found a place in his heart. The inclination spitefully to repel trifling insults is not infrequently proportioned to the haughtiness assumed. His position afforded him the opportunity of acquiring wealth by extortion, and of securing honors by the employment of adroit flattery. Consequently, his proud spirit chafes exceedingly under slights which humility would not have noticed, or noticing would have studiously ignored; but he whom success has rendered giddy can with difficulty tutor himself to accord even justice to one whose integrity is a menace to inflated emptiness.

Extravagant boasting, how often it is succeeded by repinings! Haman, having directed attention to the summit of his greatness, immediately points to a dark object in the valley of anguish. Mordecai will not bow. What are the honors worth which bring with them this bitter sting? The mere contemplation of greatness forces remembrance of insults offered by one whose degraded position is only equalled by his contemptible origin. Consequently, repinings that exalted station does not shield him from the insults of an humble Jew feed the flames of malice. These soon attain such a height that in every step he takes he is completing preparations for his own discomfiture. Malice has so far dethroned reason that he is hastening to adopt measures which being spitefully vindictive are certain to issue in self-ruin.

In his present frame of mind the suggestions of his

friends, "Let a gallows be made, and to-morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai be hanged thereon," receives his hearty indorsement. Unreasonable anger stops at nothing, and so overleaping the bounds of propriety plunges headlong into ruin. A complicated machine may tear itself in pieces simply because one little screw is too weak. A trifle may mar the happiness and embitter the life of a monarch. An insignificant act of disrespect goads Haman to adopt a course which calm judgment would have pronounced as impolitic as it was heartless and ill-timed.

He who endeavors to satisfy the soul by feeding it upon empty honors is certain to discover the unsatisfactory character of even the most glittering prizes which earth proffers. Disappointment, if not ruin, awaits him who nurses malice till he is brought to that state of mind in which he can plan to compass the death of one who is content in lowly station if liberty of conscience is accorded him. If Haman, though possessing numberless titles and uncounted wealth, is miserable because there is a dark speck in his otherwise cloudless sky, he shall be permitted unwittingly to remove the barriers which hold back the tempest of Divine wrath, enshrouding himself in darkness and extinguishing hope.

The exaltation of Shushan's intriguing sycophant is an illustration of a law quite universal—light substances come to the surface. Froth rises to the top. Again : in his unreasonable discontent because there is a drop of bitterness in his cup of joy, we have an exhibition of what is but too common in human nature—an inclination to divert the vision from the blessings received and to fix the dejected eyes upon the trifling perplexities that environ us. Who is the happiest? He who has few desires demanding gratification. Who is the most powerful? He who can subdue his own passions. Who is the richest?

Not he who possesses the most gold, but he who has the fewest wants. Who has the most enduring treasures? He who has possessions of which man cannot rob him. Who is most learned? He who has taught himself that man's knowledge is confined to a narrow circle and inaccurate even there. Who has the most and the warmest friends? He who has never permitted malice to find a lodgment in his heart, no matter how unreasonable the hostility shown him.

Alas! there is a stone in every peach, however luscious; a concealed pang in every nerve, however powerful; a sorrow in every heart, however cheerful; a skeleton in every home, however grand, imposing and well decorated. The occupant of the palace, though he walks on tapestry carpets, reclines on damask, partakes of the costliest viands, and quaffs the wine which age has mellowed, exclaims, "All this avails me *nothing*." The malice of a servant can embitter his life.

Nestling among the trees is a delightful cottage. Neatness reigns within. The jasmine clambers about the windows. Roses load the air with fragrance. Affection is smoothing the wrinkles from the brow of age. Economy is producing thrift and laying up the means of cheering the darkness of coming adversity. The rosy-faced babe, an embodiment of health and of innocence, is amusing the inmates by its prattle. The sunshine of religion has dried the tear that once wet the mother's cheek as she thought of the future of her child—its lonely journey through life after her wearied feet have crossed the river. Cheerfulness is now playing across her features; eternal hope is feeding the soul as she whispers, "I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." Independence comes home each evening bearing the rewards of cheerful exertion

in the interests of an endeared family. You exclaim, "At last I have discovered the home of perfect contentment." Wait a moment—listen. Do you not hear the father muttering his complaint, "All this availeth me nothing; my neighbor is maliciously endeavoring to injure me; he rides in a gilded carriage while I am compelled to drag my wearied feet over life's rough highway"? Do you catch the half-suppressed complaint of the wife, "Nothing, nothing; my sister has been nursing enmity toward me these many years. In a mansion, she has forgotten me in a cottage. Were I accidentally to cross her path she would scarcely deign to give me a nod of recognition. All availeth me nothing"!

O Haman, evidently this is your motto, "Self's the man." Malice as with a whip of scorpions is driving you into an act of madness. Remember, "the fool's bolt is soon shot." "Wait time and place to act thy revenge, for it is never well done in a hurry." A few brief months will place your enemy in your power. The edict will be executed. Mordecai and his kindred will be slain by the hands of another. The Jewish name may be extinguished. "Avenge not thyself." "Vengeance is a morsel for God." If you must have satisfaction upon the hated Jew, kill him with kindness; smother him in love.

Nay, poltroon, Haman knows that "he who cannot avenge himself is weak; who will not is vile." There stands the gallows. In the morning Mordecai's death-warrant will be signed. In the evening his lifeless body shall dangle in the air. The passer-by will exclaim, "Thus shall it be done to the man who refuses to reverence the king's favorite." None shall be permitted to adjudge me either too weak or too cowardly to resent an oft-repeated insult. My influence with the king is resist-

less ; my position with the queen impregnable ; my power measureless ; my purpose unalterable. The rashness of this contemptible Jew shall cost him his life.

2. Providence fixing a time when Haman shall drink the cup of anguish which he has been preparing for another.

God quite frequently times the visitations of his wrath so as to remind the sufferer of past transgressions. Belshazzar, in the infatuation which precedes destruction, orders "the golden vessels that were taken from the temple in Jerusalem to be brought that his wives and his concubines may drink therefrom." Ignoring the existence of Jehovah, "they praised the gods of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone." Lo, "in the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlesticks upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace :

"Numbered is thy kingdom and finished :

 Weighed art thou in the balance and found wanting :

 Divided is thine empire and given to the Medes and Persians."

As one link in a chain of concatenated circumstances the king passes a sleepless night. To what this was owing we know not, whether to excess in eating, to bodily indisposition, to mental anguish, or to the lashings of conscience under the remembrance of past follies ; but evidently it was the object of the sacred writer to show that this apparently trivial circumstance was the turning-point in Haman's fortunes, causing the arrows of malice to rebound upon himself. The hand of Providence is quite manifest in so timing the insomnia of the king that an opportunity was given for a complete revolution in his feelings ere the crisis of the morrow. Possibly, from some source the monarch has received intimations of

the actual condition of things. The record, it is true, furnishes no evidence of this. It is not impossible, however, that some portions of the story were intentionally suppressed, perhaps for the purpose of enhancing its rhetorical beauty, and of rendering the issue more startling. Of course there has been a selection of the incidents, not all being recorded that might have been. Quite manifestly, the narrative has been prepared with a view to the effect it was fitted to produce upon the hearer. Few perhaps would be disposed to deny that the details are so carefully selected and managed with such admirable tact that in vividness of presentation this epic eclipses the products of Shakespeare's genius—Haman's fall being painted so vividly as to impress the mind more powerfully than the unexpected overthrow of the unhappy Woolsey.

As a second link in this chain of providences the king calls for the reading of the records of the realm. There were other agencies which he might have employed to relieve the tedium of the weary hours. This seemingly was a necessary step in the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. Providentially, the reader lights upon the account of Bigthan's conspiracy against the life of the king. Jewish tradition, recognizing the finger of God in every event recorded in the narrative, affirms that the reader, opening at this place, turned over to another, but that the leaves immediately slipped back, permitting his eyes to rest again upon this.

It seems quite accidental that no reward had been bestowed upon Mordecai for his loyalty to the king. This also, as it would seem, was a necessary step to Haman's humiliation. Learning that no honor had been done to the loyal Jew, Ahasuerus immediately forms the purpose of removing the disgrace. Since gratitude enjoins the

bestowment of a becoming reward, delay shall not be permitted to render it comparatively valueless.

It so happened that Haman was in the outer court at the time the king desired to give an order for the honoring of Mordecai. He has come at an unusual hour, for malice sleeps poorly, rises early, and moves briskly. With a heart rankling with hatred, he is resolved on the destruction of his enemy. He intends to proffer his request for permission to execute one whom he views with contempt. Suddenly the door of the king's chamber opens. The ear of Haman is saluted with a welcome order, "Come in." His first greeting is in words that thrill his soul. Ah, thought Haman, humility may have value in the next world ; in this, flattery of friends and oppression of enemies win the most brilliant prizes. Mordecai is in lowly station ; I have the king's will in my keeping. Ambition has won me eminence ; courage shall retain it.

Self-conceit prevents him from thinking it possible that any one should be destined to honor but himself. Forgetting that self-flattery is a species of self-deception, and imagining that he was suggesting honors for himself, he recommends a pageantry of almost regal magnificence—all empty and transitory. How frequently honor renders proud men giddy ; haughtiness blinds them ; an over-estimate of their own worth paves the way to ruin.

"Do even so to Mordecai, the Jew." A flash of lightning from a clear sky could scarcely have struck such consternation into the mind of Haman.

O Malice, thou art a flower growing in the garden of Satan. What passion more fiendish than thou ? Thou art ever throwing fresh fuel on the flames of hatred, thereby endeavoring to render it inextinguishable. Thou art stained with the blood of the most heartless

form of murder, for thy poisoned daggers pierce the purest reputation, leaving its possessor to writhe in an agony from which the grave were a welcome release. Thou pursuest the object of hatred with cruelty as unrelenting as that which characterizes the savage. You feed upon the crushed hopes of those who have never injured you. You drink their burning tears. You wrench from them the heart of happiness and holding it palpitating in your icy fingers, gaze upon it with pleasure. You pour streams of anguish, red-hot, into hearts that are tender and forgiving; and as these streams hiss and burn their way into the soul, rendering life an unrelieved torture, a species of fiendish delight flits across your features. Youth has no charms by which to lure you from your work of misery; manhood and womanhood no barriers against the waves of misrepresentation that issue from you; age, even when bulwarked by character and adorned with piety, has no security against your envenomed shafts. If possible you would make a hell of earth and glory in the result if you were only allowed to look down in disdain upon the victims of your vengeance. Why marvel then, that you are sometimes forced to drink the cup which you have been preparing for others? You may assert that an unmixed calamity has overtaken you, but justice will affirm, "The arrows of retribution never miss their mark; the avenging gods, though their feet are shod in wool, and though they move leisurely as well as noiselessly, never fail in overtaking their victim." "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

3. Necessity pressing the cup to the lips.

It is in accordance with the requirements of justice that wickedness should be punished. This necessity arises, as it would seem, from the nature of moral government. Penalties for sin are indispensable to the con-

tinuance of goodness, to the maintenance of an equilibrium in the universe. The forces which bring about these much-needed and far-reaching results are often as insignificant, singly, as they are resistless when in combined form they are drawing after them consequences connected with the violation of divine laws. Invisible threads, woven from hidden spindles into a cord which human malignity cannot sever, are noiselessly dragging the captive to the bar of justice and thence to the verge of despair.

It is also worthy of note that the punishment inflicted frequently occurs at such times as powerfully to remind the recipient that he is reaping as he sowed; that an omniscient divinity is meting out retributive justice. For example: God determines to humble Nebuchadnezzar. He might have called down punishment upon him at any hour. The infliction of the deserved humiliation was so timed, however, as to leave no doubt either upon his own mind or upon the minds of others that the calamities endured were direct penalties of his own arrogance. Walking in the palace he exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built . . . by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" The plan of his capital—being such as only ambition could have suggested—was one which wealth alone enabled him to execute. The city contained costly temples, a royal palace of unrivalled grandeur, hanging-gardens that were reckoned among the wonders of the world. Surrounded by high walls of immense thickness, it was fitted apparently by the nature of its defences to be the capital of a powerful empire. Projected on a scale adapted to perpetuate the memory of its founder, it became a marvellous exhibition of architectural and mechanical skill, and was destined to become a monument

of Nebuchadnezzar's greatness and to defy the touch of time, seemingly. "Great Babylon"—stones and bricks and mortar, on their way to become a mass of ruins. "I built"—he acknowledges neither Jehovah, Jove, nor Baal. Scarcely have his lips given expression to the pride of his heart, ere a voice from heaven exclaims, "Thy kingdom is departed from thee, and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field." A terrible malady is upon him. The time at which it came left no doubt as to the sin whose penalty he was enduring.

The place where the punishment occurs, as well as the date of its occurrence, sometimes points to former iniquity. An instance of this is furnished in the life of Ahab, who caused the murder of Naboth simply that he might enlarge the palace-grounds by adding thereto the vineyard of the murdered man. Mortally wounded in battle, his life-blood dripped from the chariot upon the soil which he had acquired by knavery.

The history of Jezebel is another illustration that place, as well as time, is employed to remind the transgressor of the particular sin whose penalty he is enduring. To pass by the incidents of her life, it may suffice to observe that the circumstances attending her death point to past transgressions. Hurlled by her servants from a window of the royal palace, she fell a mangled corpse at the feet of Jehu's horses, sprinkling with her blood the chariot of the conqueror and the walls of the mansion in which she had plotted treason. Though it was no part of Jehu's plan to become an instrument in fulfilling the prophecy of Elijah the Tishbite—"In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the the flesh of Jezebel"—still he became, under the guidance of Providence, the avenger of Israel, meting out death to Jezebel under circumstances

which tend to rivet attention upon the character and the enormity of her sin.

In the case of Haman, the place as well as the time was no doubt arranged by an overruling Providence. He must drink his cup of humiliation in Shushan, quaffing its dregs in the presence of Persian subjects and under the gaze of those who knew the intensity of his hostility toward the Jews. He must endure the humiliation at the time he hoped to be executing the plan which malice had devised; must confer honor upon one during the hour in which he hoped to satiate his revenge by gazing upon a form writhing in the agonies of death.

It is not necessary to suppose that Ahasuerus designed to humiliate Haman. Quite manifestly his main purpose was to give expression to gratitude for past deliverance, to make acknowledgment to one whom he had too long neglected. The intensity of Haman's anguish was not dependent, however, upon the motive which actuated the king. How often does it happen that malice renders its possessor susceptible to suffering from words casually spoken! Ignorant, it may be, of the bitterness that rankles in a companion's bosom, a friend may stir malice afresh by simply praising one toward whom his auditor feels hatred. The wound is the deeper because prudence dictates silence. Fiendish indeed is that temper which receives pangs from kindness shown another. Alas! malice would rejoice were it able to render its victim friendless. Happily it cannot. It makes for itself more enemies than it makes for him whom it designs to injure. It would, if possible, remove the barriers of divine vengeance and pour currents of wrath upon him whom it hates. Its rage is impotent, for Christ has said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

If any one doubts the existence of malice, or questions the possibility of its becoming intense in an age which boasts of exhibiting the spirit of the Master, let him endeavor to purify society. He will soon find himself a target for envemoned shafts which only Satanic ingenuity can hurl. Is he a Christian? Let him strike vigorous blows for a higher type of practical piety. Let him cry aloud and spare not. Let him attempt to remove the abominations that exist in Zion, defending the honor of religion by separating gross crimes from the Lord's table, or removing temptation from the unwary by closing the door-ways through which some are heedlessly pressing forward to wretchedness. He will find himself the object of a measure of animosity having scarcely a parallel; and to render the situation more trying he will be reminded that he is failing to exhibit the spirit of Christ. Is it the spirit of the Lord to permit spiritual truth to be trampled in the dust? Is it his spirit to pour streams of hatred upon those who endeavor to defend the honor of religion? Spirit of the Lord! Was it not in accordance with the spirit of the Lord scornfully to designate Herod "that fox"? to look in anger upon the multitude? to drive the traders from the temple? to exclaim, "Ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, how can ye escape the damnation of hell"?

Great was the humiliation to which Haman was subjected. He could not endure that Mordecai should refuse to do him honor—now he is compelled to honor Mordecai. He was not content to ride forth as prime-minister unless Mordecai bowed to him—now he may walk and hold the reins of the horse upon which his enemy rides. Though it is easy to walk when one leads his own horse, it is humiliating when compelled to lead the horse of another, and he a person of inferior rank,

despised, hated, marked for death. Haman's worship of self was so intense that he desired all honors heaped upon himself—now he is loading Mordecai with honors. Unable to endure the infringement of a single right, he is forced to surrender all, to subordinate his will to another's, and to herald the promotion of one whom he detests. It was a bitter humiliation ; one, however, which malice richly merited, and his own conduct purchased.

Mordecai led through Shushan by his bitterest enemy ! How often malice is compelled to pay tributes of respect to those whom it desires to execute ! The promptings of ambition force it to drink the cup of bitterness without presenting evidences of nausea. The outward world of action how widely it differs from the inward world of feeling ! There may be words of praise on the lips while contempt is in the heart ; actions which seem to indicate regard while hostility reigns within ; honors lavished in public while the gallows is already erected, and only a favorable opportunity is needed to consummate the atrocious purposes.

Haman's interests forced compliance with the royal order. Advancement was dependent upon the favor of the monarch. Hence he was prepared to practise two-facedness ; perhaps this was natural to him.

This class of persons still lives. They believe in one thing, only one, that which pays. They are your enemy or your friend as seems to give most promise of advantage. They load you with praise among your friends, and blacken you with calumny among your foes. Of religion they have about as much, perhaps, as Judas, though they betray you for less than thirty pieces of silver—for a dim hope of personal advantage ; of principle they have as much as a hornet, which makes honey for

you to-day and stings you to-morrow, killing itself in the frenzy. Their consciences can be made to point to any conceivable angle of the compass, and to some angles quite inconceivable, direct opposites, north-south, east-west. Even the gentlest wind that fans the hope of profit will veer their pliant consciences around. They might make first-class hypocrites if they possessed stability. As it is they are only great nobodies; splendid failures; glittering emptiness. They bleat with the sheep, and as the process of shearing goes on stand with moistened eyes and sympathizing hearts. No sooner, however, is the fleece taken off than they snatch it up and running away pawn it for some instrument with which to flay the next innocent lamb that comes within their reach. Nice, they are as nice as sweetmeats; as oily as butter; as smooth as polished marble; as polite as Lord Chesterfield; as religious as the concentration of monkish austerity. Like cats, no matter how you drop them they come down feet first. Alighted they are ready to purr; out of sight they are scratching the life out of your reputation, or rendering the neighborhood hideous by their squalls.

What is to be done with malicious persons, philosophy has not yet determined. To deliver them a moral lecture is useless. You might as well lecture to the Hottentots upon the improprieties of Paris fashions—they could not alter them if they would. You might as well promulgate anathemas against the Bushmen for permitting their hair to remain matted in filth—they would not comb it if they could. They prefer it as nature arranges it—it renders hats unnecessary. Preach the gospel of forgiveness to a heart filled with malice? You might as well put jewels in the dog's food, or chant anthems to a lion. Hope to eradicate malice by lecturing upon the beauties

of charity? Better pronounce your lessons upon the mountain air, and let them rebound from the rocks and reverberate amid the gorges and whistle over the icy peaks and live in the undulating waves of the agitated atmosphere. Coax the malicious person into consistency? Your time would be about as well spent in endeavoring to change the leopard's spots, or in sowing mignonette on the waves of the ocean. Fight malice? Better undertake to fight the phantasmagoria of German transcendentalism. Love the malicious into parting with hatred? Love them into treating you in your absence as they do in your presence? Hold an electric light to the eyes of a bat, hoping he may see the sun; point out personal faults to a self-centred man without making him angry; with a view of converting venom into honey, sing to an adder; "scatter seeds of kindness for reaping by-and-by;" labor on any manifest impossibility, but do not waste the energies of existence upon the thankless, fruitless, tantalizing effort to love a two-faced person into possessing such fixedness of principle that men know where to find him. Visit him with vengeance? Nay, that will be to return railing for railing, injury for injury, folly for folly. Rather pursue the course recommended in Rom. 13 : 20, 21.

O Malice, as you possess the temper of a fiend, how can you hope to escape punishment? You are certain to bring it upon yourself. To imagine otherwise would be to suppose that justice had abdicated its throne; that personal animosity was permitted to render existence intolerable.

Let those therefore who may have been wounded by the arrows of hatred, take courage. The malicious shall yet slink into merited obscurity. Covering their faces through shame, they shall find anguish their portion; ap-

prehensions of coming calamities a present possession ; dishonor an undying legacy. When they rage and imagine vain things, He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, earth shall have them in derision. Their overthrow is inevitable. Others need not interpose, either to render it more certain or to hasten its coming. Leave them alone ; ere long “their mischief shall return upon their own heads, and their violent dealings shall come down upon their own pate.” Let them alone. Not to notice them is the worst punishment you can inflict upon them. Let them have their quarrel with themselves. “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.” “The wicked shall eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices.”

Mordecai, finding his reward in his own soul, went contentedly from the pageant to his humble station at the king's gate. The honors he had enjoyed were empty. For his fidelity to the interests of God's cause he had in his own heart enduring reward, the consciousness of having done right. The commandments of our Heavenly Father are righteous altogether, and in keeping of them there is great reward ;” “is,” it does not say, *shall be*. The reward, far from being dependent upon the contingencies of the shadowy future, is a present possession—indeed its enjoyment in the present is a title-deed to its full fruition in the hereafter.

4. Conscience producing apprehensions of yet greater calamities.

Haman, deeply humiliated and agitated by conflicting emotions, hastens homeward. At this none need wonder, since home is the sweetest place on earth, especially for the wounded spirit. The very word has melody in it, particularly to him whose heart has been pierced by the arrows of disappointment or lacerated by

the insults of the unkind. Home, the hollyhocks at its door are sweeter than the roses in the conservatory of a palace. Home, cold potatoes on its table are almost as delicious as venison in the residence of a stranger. Under one's own roof the threadbare carpet has beauty—it speaks, it may be, of infant feet. Heart makes home. The hawk prefers its own nest to that of the oriole. To the fox a hole in the rocks is dearer than the nest of the hanging-bird, no matter how gracefully it swings on the branch, nor how merrily the songsters are chirping near. Haman, knowing the best thing to do under the circumstances, carried his wounded heart homeward. May the disappointments of life always drive us thither, to its sweet sympathies and its affectionate tenderness. May they never be permitted to lead us into halls of unsanctified mirth or to the gilded palaces where forgetfulness of anguish is purchased at ten cents a glass—where the seeds of dissipation are sowed with a profusion that insures a harvest of wretchedness.

Within the enclosure of home Haman seeks relief for an overburdened heart. He tells his friends everything that has befallen him. The owl may hoot, perched on its own limb ; the lion growl, in its own den ; the bear grow sullen, in its own cave. That which Haman deems it imprudent to do on the street, or in the royal palace, he does not hesitate to do in the presence of his more intimate friends. He throws open the windows of his soul, inviting wife and acquaintances to look within, permitting them to observe how completely malice has defeated itself. The humiliation which pride prevented him from acknowledging in public, he now makes no effort to conceal. The results of the morning's proceedings were disheartening. He confesses it. He had gone forth in high spirits ; he has returned depressed beyond measure.

He had constructed the gallows which now stood a monument of his presumption, a prophecy of coming disaster, an evidence of the powerlessness of malice to accomplish its purposes. Disappointment and the apprehension of yet deeper humiliation haunt him. Fear has laid its finger upon him, benumbing all his energies. A strange people, who worship a strange God, "the King of kings," have begun to prevail against him. His superstitious forebodings create new terrors, peopling the future with invisible enemies. Consequently, he anticipates complete discomfiture.

In his present state of mind, his friends prove poor comforters. Omens of evil and fear inspired by the conviction that fate has issued a decree against him have destroyed energy of character, leaving him at the mercy of those whose premonitions of disaster have severed them from the hope of realizing the consummation of his schemes. The tie of self-interest, which alone united them to his plans of malice, has been snapped. When one's own heart has been paralyzed by superstition, the utterances of others, announcing the approach of retribution, falls like nitre upon raw flesh. Haman's heart sank within him as his friends affirmed, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him."

How speedily are they alienated in feeling whom only the bonds of a common malice unite! Though by the intensity of his personal animosity the injudicious person may have succeeded in associating others with him, he is destined to desertion; is sure to become friendless. When ruin becomes inevitable those who goaded him on will be the first to predict coming disasters; the first to give a falling friend the parting kick. As they were

the first to applaud him when favorable breezes seemed wafting him to the port of prosperity, so will they be the first to denounce him when tempests have driven him on the verge of the vortex.

O Malice, bear in memory that however many associate with you now, and however eagerly they may urge you to deeds of vengeance, all will desert you in the hour of trial, leaving you at the time when most you need their presence—as the billows of retribution are sweeping over the desolated soul. When the consequences of your deeds come trooping forward like clouds before the wind, you will be left single-handed to endure the fury from which you at least cannot escape, however fortunate others may be in rolling the responsibility upon your shoulders. As the tempest breaks upon your head, the flashes of vengeance will find no other object to attract them save your guilty self, and will leave you like the charred trunk of a cedar, leafless, companionless. O Malice, as such a doom awaits you, why not seek to convert yourself into forgiveness and love? Why not heed the voice of Wisdom, “Forgive your enemies;” “Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;” “If ye love them which love you what thank have ye?” “Be ye merciful, even as your Father in heaven is merciful.”

In emergencies such as malice brought upon Haman, wretchedness is greatly intensified by the vividness of the vision that the ruin is self-purchased; that an unexpected concurrence of circumstances is certain to bring about its consummation. Conscience is then aroused; alas! it may be too late to avert impending evils. At an earlier period it might have conducted to a course which might have issued in such a measure of faith as would have inspired resignation; now it engenders cowardice,

which disqualifies the possessor for meeting ills which a forgiving spirit cannot now avert.

Perhaps Haman's bitterest regrets were produced by the conviction that he had involved others in disgrace. Wife and children, relatives and friends are henceforth unmentioned except as they are suffering the effects of his folly. How often does it happen that the malicious person draws down dishonor upon innocent friends connected with him ! A father, bearing resentment, injures a neighbor ; his sons and daughters incur odium, and are shunned by the honorable, being left to form associations which seriously impair the chances of success in life. A wife, it may be, maliciously circulates reports detrimental to the character of another, or endeavors to injure the reputation of one whose social position excites envy ; her husband is thereby involved in difficulties. Possibly devotion to her becomes an agency which impairs his standing and opens avenues for retributive justice.

It may not be improper to observe that the gallows which Haman prepared for another was the gallows upon which he himself was hanged. Malice wrought its accustomed result. It drank the cup it had prepared for another. It met the fate which it devised for an enemy. His execrated memory is a beacon-light along the avenues through which malice is ever hastening to its doom. Will the malicious take warning ? "Forewarned is forearmed"—to the wise : to the unwise, "forewarned" is fore-destined to an anguish increased by the recollection that warnings were neglected.

Malice, accept an earnest appeal. Cease your work of vengeance ere the consequences come home. Transform hatred into love ere it transforms itself into malignity. Eradicate that selfishness which prevents you from paying

due regard to the rights of others. Lay the axe at the root of this upas ere its overshadowing branches shut out the light of heaven, and its exhalations, destroying kindness of disposition, annihilate the possibility of enjoying the fruits of piety. Love your enemies, or they will come to hate you with an intensity begotten by your own animosity—a hatred as enduring as the weary moments of a life that is cheerless, friendless, rayless, anguishful.

May you learn, O Malice, to retain kind feelings toward all, even in a world where streams of hatred are pouring in upon everything pure, noble and good. Bowing at Christ's cross, offer the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Imbibing the Saviour's spirit, you may ascend from the plains of malevolence to the sunny mountain of benevolence. You will be transformed into love. Happiness will reign within, and will shed its rays on all who come within the circle of its influence. Hope, lifting the curtain of futurity, will disclose an ascending pathway to that city within whose portals malice is never permitted to enter. In the calmness of life's evening, as the heart is nearing home, it will be heard singing,

"Be kind to each other !
The night's coming on,
When friend and when brother
Perchance may be gone :
Then midst our dejection
How sweet to have earned
The blest recollection
Of kindness returned,
When day hath departed,
And memory keeps
Her watch, broken-hearted,
Where all she loved sleeps.

“ Let falsehood assail not
Nor envy disprove :
Let trifles prevail not
Against those ye love !
Nor change with to-morrow
Should fortune take wing ;
But the deeper the sorrow
The closer still cling !
Oh, be kind to each other,
The night's coming on,
When friend and when brother
Perchance may be gone.”

Around the clay tabernacle, when the kindly spirit has taken its departure, mourning friends, amid tears, will whisper, With enemies many, he was a friend to all : with malice toward none and with charity for all, he marked his journey through life with a spirit of forgiveness, hoping for pardon from Him whose favor is life. On the marble that marks his final resting-place affection will carve,

“ No curse he breathed, no plaint he made,
But when in death's dark pang he sighed,
Prayed for his enemies and died.”

At least, treasure the lesson, sounding down through the ages, and emphasized in the life of Haman,

“ Of all antagonists, most charity
Is due to malicious men ; for they do
Sooner hurt themselves than any other.”

VIII.

THE CRISIS.

“ If by free-will in our own paths we move,
How are we bounded by decrees above ?
Whether we drive, or whether we are driven,
All's known, overruled, and rewarded or punished of Heaven.”

As we advance in life some truths become as conspicuous as characters graven in stone. Visible representatives they are of thought that burned and of emotion that struggled for embodiment in enduring form.

As we descend toward “ the sequestered vale ” Charity seems to whisper, Tutor yourselves to cherish the memory of a friend's kindness and to bury the remembrance of the wrongs you have received. Bitter experiences, however, are creating the impression that gentleness, however perfect it may become, will be compelled at last to present its plea for a right to continued existence, if indeed it is not forced to assume a measure of sternness in order to repel the assaults of studied cruelty. Most of us in proportion as we possessed nobility of nature entered life believing every person innocent, truthful, honorable and cautious about invading the rights of others. Everything tending to produce an opposite impression was for a time explained away, charity preferring to enjoy the privilege of “ bearing all things, hoping all things.” At length, however, the evidence of human depravity became so overwhelming as to produce a crisis

in our methods of reasoning and a partial revolution in our feelings. We were forced, as we thought, to adopt a new theory. We have since inclined, it may be, to the opinion that by nature every person is untruthful, dishonest, conscienceless. We are disposed to exclaim, If any are not let them present the truth with the accompanying proof ; experience has convinced us that each person will go as far in wickedness as society will allow, or his own sense of prudence will permit, provided the temptation comes along the proper lines and with sufficient force. Under the guidance of this conviction, everything that tends to favor the theory that unselfishness may rule human hearts or that integrity of character is the birthright of many is interpreted as but semblances of qualities that rarely exist. Alas ! the wretchedness of him who has lost faith in humanity.

With advancing years the belief becomes more intense that though imposition ought not to be hastily resisted, there comes a time when it should be endured no longer. Measureless is the capacity of human nature for concealing its real purposes ; marvellous is its cunning in cloaking malignity under politeness of manner ; wonderful is its adroitness in hiding cruelty under honeyed words, but these, potent as they are, cannot render the sufferer insensible to the agony he is enduring, nor prevent him from believing that justice sanctions his defence of invaded rights. One can only become callous to anguish by ceasing to be human ; submissive to long-continued oppressions by surrendering those qualities which ennoble human character. Right, though it remains amiable under protracted persecutions, is certain to defend itself at last.

Scarcely less universal is the conviction that there comes a time when wickedness is likely to be stricken

with terror; when it can no longer secure exemption from penalties. In a career of iniquity there comes a crisis, a period when the tides of vengeance roll over the transgressor. As he stands facing them, horror seizes him; despair paralyzes him. The past has deceived him; the present torments him; the future terrifies him.

Until this crisis in the progress of evil has arrived, efforts to effect its removal are likely to prove unavailing. The times must ripen for change. There must be a concurrence of circumstances. John Huss, with convictions as deep as the soul of man, undertook to overturn the system of formalism which was oppressing man and crushing religion. As the evil had not yet run its course, he perished at the stake. Wyckliffe met the same fate. Luther's labors were successful in effecting reformation not solely, nor mainly, because of his energy, but because a more favorable opportunity had come. Many were ready to adhere to one who had the heroism to expose the abominations that were practised in the name of religion. Does the past contain no lesson for the present? We are witnessing many things which pain us, the prostitution of religion to the level of a selfish age, unscriptural methods of raising money for religious purposes, the forgiveness of sins for pew-rents, a disregard of the honor of the Lord, adherence to an outward organization rather than to the truth of God, a measure of Phariseism which rivals that against which Christ contended and which nailed him to the cross, an abuse of the doctrine of gratuitous justification, a lust for numbers in the communion, evincing more desire for money than for the development of Christian character. A casual investigation of history will suffice to convince us that these evils will probably grow worse and worse until

their prevalence causes such a revulsion in sentiment as to render reformation possible. Meanwhile, as we are entering our protest against their continuance, let us encourage ourselves by waiting on the Lord. Imitating Esther's example, let us watch the signs of the times, and when the favorable opportunity occurs gird ourselves for the work, resolved to effect a change, or at least to do what we can.

Nor is it less certain that a time arrives when the consequences of our acts force reflection, producing amazement at past folly, and extorting a decision upon perplexing questions. Our actions are far-reaching in their effects. The returning waves of folly may break over our heads. As they come rolling in with accumulating force, astonishment seizes us. Anger succeeds. What shall be done? is the question which forces itself upon us for solution.

These truths find, as we apprehend, an illustration in the narrative under consideration. The leading characters of the Persian empire are at the same banquet. Opposing interests are struggling for the mastery. Varying purposes are moving the actors; conflicting thoughts are agitating them; different emotions are thrilling them. Haman, hastily brought from his wife's side by the king's messenger, is apprehensive of coming disaster. Superstition has unmanned him. Though eagerly desirous of securing the execution of Mordecai, he dares not solicit the royal permission to consummate his villainy. The prophecy of his friends rings in his ears, "Thou shalt surely fall before him." Agitated with emotions of a different nature, Ahasuerus is desirous of ascertaining the wish of the queen, and is prepared to grant it provided it is within the limits of reason. Scarcely any sacrifice will seem too great if it will satisfy

Esther's demands and quiet his own heart. The queen is asking, Shall I be able to rescue myself from the impending doom? can I deliver my people? is the light of divine truth to be extinguished in blood? Hope is contending with fear. She is ready to sacrifice herself in the effort to effect deliverance for the harassed church. Will this secure the repeal of an irreversible law?

The narrative presents four topics :

1. Esther's plea for life.
2. The oppressed striking the oppressor.
3. Iniquity stricken with terror.
4. Past conduct exciting amazement, arousing anger and forcing a present decision.

1. The scene which presents itself is interesting. Ahasuerus in the robes of eastern royalty, and possessing unrestricted authority, is sipping wine, unconscious that the conquest of his will is the prize after which Esther aspires. By his side sits Haman, raised to a position of influence such as falls to the lot of but few. With eye fixed on the monarch he is endeavoring to determine the import of the lights and shadows which flit across the royal features. Servile to a degree only attainable by sycophants, he is ready to applaud or to censure, to employ truth or falsehood, to do right or to do wrong, to be kind or to be cruel, to deal frankly or to practise dissimulation, anything that will further his own schemes or subserve the interests of the monarch. The central figure, however, is the Jewess, whose jewelled fingers dispense the wine; whose countenance, bearing the marks of grief, is cheerful though subdued; whose languid eye is turned toward the monarch, encouraging the hope that the request thrice made will now be granted; whose heart is throbbing with hope for her people; on whose influence is suspended the happiness and the lives of many;

whose word shall decide Haman's destiny. Suddenly the silence is broken—"What is thy petition, Queen Esther? What is thy request?" The king's heart seeks relief such as only the candor of the queen can impart.

Thus appealed to, Esther presents a plea which for eloquence and power has few rivals, none except in those outbursts of feeling which render even stupidity eloquent. Her first prayer is, "Let my life be given me at my petition." Dependence though abject, and weakness though complete, have often a measure of power to which independence and strength rarely attain. The will which opposition cannot break may sometimes be conquered by the plea of helplessness. Strength exerted arouses opposition; weakness often secures results which the onsets of energy fail in producing. Weakness acquires strength by acknowledging its dependence and casting itself upon the compassion of one whom a sense of honor binds to a course of conduct regulated by principles of justice. Were it otherwise the physical weakness of the fairer sex would render them liable to endure many impositions. As it is, however, feminine tenderness is endowed with a measure of power, peculiar it is true, but in its own sphere nearly resistless. The Christian wife may say with Paul, "When I am weak then am I strong." The justice of her cause, pleaded amid tears, wins victory, often conquering a will which no amount of angry opposition could have subdued.

Having rolled upon her husband's heart the burden which she had been bearing, Esther finds relief. She had maintained silence till the time had arrived to speak. As further delay would have imperilled her cause she unburdens her heart. The crisis in her feelings is therefore passed. To him who has her happiness and her life in his keeping she has revealed the cause of her sorrow,

committing the future to his decision. Though reluctant to part with life under a royal order instigated by malevolence, she is ready to die if the death-warrant shall issue from the lips of one whom she loves. May we not see in this an epitome of the spiritual history of the sinner? Perceiving the avenger of death on his track, the penitent comes bowing at the footstool of sovereignty, imploring, "Let my life be given me at my petition," a forfeit to the law, let it be redeemed by mercy. He brings his suit before the King of kings, preferring, if death is to be his doom, that the decree shall drop upon his ears from the lips of a merciful God. At heaven's court, however, no culprit ever fruitlessly implored pardon. Nor needs he to preface the petition with, "If I have found favor;" "If it please the king." "The unspeakable gift furnishes him a pledge of acceptance and a secure foundation of hope." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Amazement must have filled the mind of Ahasuerus. The queen's life a forfeit! What meaneth this? Scarcely has the wonder found expression in an altered countenance ere he is startled by the words, "And my people at my request." "My people," who are they? To what nationality does she belong? Is she a Jewess? Does she link her destiny with that detested race? Is she so attached to the Jews that she intercedes in their behalf? Ready to die with them! As ardent for their deliverance as for her own! Madness! or is it the sublimity of self-sacrifice?

Not long, however, is the king left to musings so unfamiliar. In assigning a reason for the petition the queen adroitly quotes the language of the obnoxious decree, "to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish."

The astonished sovereign perhaps whispers, "Haman's edict," "Sold?" "Sold." Does she refer to the proffered payment of money into the royal treasury? Am I to be considered base enough to sell the privilege of destroying her kindred? Would she have maintained silence, bearing the rigors of servitude without a murmur, if she and her people had been consigned to bondage? Is her humility equal to her heroism? Her language exhibits a marvellous readiness to submit to my will as well as a remarkable instance of devotion to kindred. Nor has attachment to her people blinded her either to my interests or to the character of Haman. She perceives, and dares to affirm, "although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage," the enemy could not, by the payment of money, make compensation for the unsparing destruction of all the Jews. To lose my subjects would indeed be damaging to the interests of my kingdom. If by the language she employs she means to intimate that Haman is unworthy to vex the king, she gives expression to feelings that have begun to stir within my own soul.

Certainly the plea is well presented, neatly, adroitly, forcibly. It will be difficult for Ahasuerus to escape the force of her appeal if he retains any affection for her. The completeness of her self-abandonment and the frankness with which she acknowledges herself dependent upon his forbearance appeal with great force to his sense of honor, and arouse sympathies which he can scarcely disregard without seeming to become less than human. Moreover, unless his pledged word is valueless and his affections mere toys with which to amuse innocent victims, he will be constrained to grant her petition. Honor and happiness are involved in discovering some way

of escape for one whom his own folly has entangled in the meshes of coming disaster.

2. The oppressed striking the oppressor.

The plea ended, the queen's attitude changes. Rising from her suppliant position, she is transformed into a prosecutrix. She has completed her supplication with the king and is now an antagonist facing her enemy. The hand that was clasped in prayer is now extended in anger. The eye that was moist with tears assumes sternness and flashes indignation upon the embodiment of iniquity whose presence pollutes the sanctity of the royal apartments. To the question of the king, "Who is he, and where is he who durst presume in his heart to do so?" she exclaims, intensifying the emphasis with a gesture designating the guilty person, "The adversary and the enemy is this wicked Haman." The answer to the sovereign's question reveals the fact that innocence has risen in its vindication. Justice, which had but just finished her plea, hurls its arrows at defiant wickedness, inflicting a deadly wound. Evidently Esther's piety is not of that sentimental kind which assumes that innocence has no rights except the privilege of enduring wrongs. Hers is not that type of religion which is so lacking in common-sense as to expend all its energies in imploring Heaven to pay a price for cowardice. She prays, and in this acts wisely, but she rises from her knees and endeavors to obtain an answer to her petition by facing him upon whom she is seeking to secure an infliction of the penalties of crime. Indeed, her courage in action may be accepted as evidence of the sincerity of her prayer.

It is a mistake to suppose that piety is devoid of courage. The genuine is essentially courageous. Our Mas-

ter's life was a rare exhibition of manliness. It is a painful fact that some of the religion which bears His name breathes a spirit which is at variance with the spirit of Him who "looked round in anger upon the multitude." It may perhaps be said that Christ recommended, "Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek turn the other also." But does he command us to continue turning first the one cheek then the other for an indefinite period of time? He enjoins, "He that hath no sword, let him buy one." Surely he expected his people to defend their invaded rights. Perhaps it is not too much to affirm that adherence to the truth, kindly manifested, would have won conquests for the Gospel in comparison with which its present achievements dwindle into insignificance. Some one, it may be, responds, "Our Lord commanded us to exhibit the spirit of forbearance and forgiveness." He indeed did. But does self-vindication in no way aid human nature in bearing imposition and in granting pardon, especially in those instances in which forgiveness is not solicited?

Esther's heroism is like that of God's people in every age—a willingness to surrender influence, position, wealth, reputation, life itself, for the honor of religion and the deliverance of the church. Certainly the martyr-spirit is a condition of successful Christian work. He who undertakes to thwart the schemes of wicked men, to denounce iniquity in its varied forms and to defend the integrity of scriptural religion, will be called upon to encounter a measure of opposition which demands the exercise of heroism. The Christian who dares to say, "This adversary and this enemy," engages in warfare with an antagonist who, while showing no quarter, is reckless of the agencies he employs—calumny, deceit, injustice, oppression, any and all means being deemed legitimate

which give promise of success. "One," especially a man of principle, "never has so much need of wit as when he has to do with a wicked adversary." It is war to the end—a struggle in which the unprincipled have one advantage—they employ agencies which honorable antagonists are not at liberty to employ.

Does Ahasuerus now perceive the extent of his folly? With little or no reflection he gave authority for the promulgation of Haman's decree; but he may not now escape the necessity of weighing the subject in all its aspects. Then he was following the guidance of policy. It has brought him into trouble. It will not answer his purpose now. It will not extricate him. He who determines his course of conduct from the shifting scenes in the kaleidoscope of present advantage is liable to become involved in difficulties from which escape seems impossible. For a man of principle half his wit is enough; for a man of policy the whole is too little.

One circumstance connected with Esther's accusation deserves notice. She states her charge against Haman in his hearing, affording him an opportunity of defence. The record does not intimate that previous to this she uttered one word against him, not even to her countrymen; certainly she has not endeavored to poison the sovereign's mind against him. She prefers to deal honorably. If she cannot carry her suit on its merit, she will make no effort to secure a decision by weight of personal influence or by arousing the feelings of her husband till he has become in measure incapable of forming an impartial judgment—till by lending a too partial ear to one-sided statements of the case he has incautiously committed himself, honor and a sense of consistency impelling him to render a decision unfavorable to one who has had no opportunity of defending himself.

Alas ! how often, not alone in civil courts but in ecclesiastical as well—perhaps in the latter more frequently—littleness is found engaged in an attempt to wrench a committal from those into whose too confiding bosoms exparte statements have been poured ! Oh that such could be induced to imitate Esther's example, and say what they have to say in the presence of the court and in the hearing of the accused ! Alas ! the hope is perhaps in vain ; for those who can practise such unfairness are likely to be incapable of appreciating the extent, and possibly even the nature, of their crime.

3. Iniquity stricken with terror.

The responsibility of the edict has come home to Haman where it belongs. To escape from the results of our own acts is nearly impossible. "If you have set your house on fire, approach and warm yourself by it," take all the comfort the conflagration can afford, for you shall take the consequences. Haman finds every avenue of escape closed. For him there is no way of exit except through the doorway of death. Accordingly, he is seized with terror. Though apparently bold when nothing opposed his reckless course of wickedness, he is evidently a coward by nature. The period to determine a person's courage is when the very earth seems to tremble under his feet ; when he is held to accountability for past conduct ; when friends are forsaking him because he adheres to his purpose in the face of threatening ruin ; when wealth, position, happiness, everything is slipping from beneath his hold. Is he then calm, resolute, self-centred ? Does he know how to be destitute as well as how to abound ? If so, then has he true courage, that which relies on self, a clear head to plan, a strong will to decide, energy to execute. They, however, are comparatively few who are so constituted as to remain unperturbed in

emergencies ; fewer still are they who become more calm when the crisis is upon them, when the vindication of the past and the hopes of the future are suspended upon the issue of an hour. Some such there are, whose faculties are more fully under control when all interests, past and future, are focussed upon one decision. There are others who in such emergencies tremble as the aspen leaf. Nervousness disqualifies them for reasoning. Wavering purposes place them at the mercy of circumstances. Physical weakness leaves them without the force to repel the waves of adversity which come rolling in. They whimper and whine ; now resolve on action, now on inaction. At one moment they erect themselves as if about to toss the burden to the ground and trample upon it ; the next they flinch and settle down into despair. The man for a crisis is the man to win life's battles.

"The butcher, though he does not fear many sheep, may perhaps fear the lion." Haman, though he does not hesitate to procure an edict for the slaughter of all the Jews, now stands terror-stricken before a woman. Thousands of Jewish subjects, having no means of controlling the will of the sovereign and being at his mercy, are a herd which the prime minister can purchase for slaughter ; but the queen, possessing power with the king, is one before whom Haman slinks back smitten in conscience, a suppliant for mercy. "Big and empty, like the Heidelberg tun," he is left with no alternative but to "kiss the hand which he dares not bite."

Arrogance and wickedness have incurred the penalties which they merited. Cruelty, pride and ambition, though they secured temporary success, have issued in disaster. Let those therefore who are disposed to exclaim, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency," encourage their faith by observing that

those who march to power through avenues of cruelty are amenable to Him who "raiseth up the poor out of the dust," and who pronounces woes against those "who devise iniquity and work evil." In the sanctuary of God, if nowhere else, the Christian heart, though it may have been perplexed by the success of the wicked, is enabled to exclaim, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction;" "they set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walketh through the earth," but "they shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

A course of sin generally draws after it punishment even in this life. Ahab reaped as he sowed. Judas exclaimed, "I have sinned, and went and hanged himself." Cain said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Herod died under the penalties his own transgressions incurred. Assuredly we may exclaim with Paul, "Thinkest thou, O man, . . . that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? . . . who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality; eternal life: but unto them that . . . do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Accordingly, the Scriptures, in announcing a future state in which the transgressions of this life work out misery as naturally as cause produces effect, proclaim a law which reason affirms is not only regnant here, but for aught that appears to the contrary must remain uninterrupted even after death has caused the clay tabernacle to crumble back to its original elements. Were we called upon to believe that God arbitrarily interferes, either in this life or in the next, to render his creatures unhappy, we might be excused for inveighing against such revolt-

ing conceptions of Deity ; but since the Bible only asks us to believe that God declines to deliver the wicked from the consequences of their own acts, leaving them, as they prefer to be left, free to pile fagots for their own burning, there is evidently no ground upon which to base an impeachment of his justice. Surely he is at liberty to allow the obdurate sinner to have his own way. Assuredly he is not chargeable with injustice because he declines to destroy human liberty in order to rescue those who prefer sin and its consequences to goodness and its rewards. He hath called : they have refused. Continuance in obduracy renders salvation from sin an impossibility—and there is no salvation except salvation from sin. Transgression and misery are indissolubly united. Consequently God has simply to let the wicked alone, their own transgressions like lead will weigh them down to wretchedness. Without separation from these, heaven cannot be. Alas ! the wicked desire these and heaven too. As well expect thorn-bushes to yield grapes ; or the man in the moon to appreciate perfumery ; or that folly multiplied by folly can yield anything else than trouble. Zero multiplied by infinity equals zero. No-character, multiplied by eternity, equals no-character : no-happiness.

Haman's purpose is defeated, defeated while he is engaged in efforts to consummate it. He is environed by difficulties which compel him to plead for his life while he was expecting to obtain royal permission for the execution of Mordecai. Why marvel ? It was of the wicked that this declaration was penned, "When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them . . . and they shall not escape."

To attribute this unlooked-for result to the working of fate seems little less than an impious attempt to destroy

faith in an overruling Providence. The remarkable manner in which dissimulation is unveiled, arrogance checked, cruelty defeated and oppression's yoke broken, forces the reflecting to exclaim, "There are many devices in a man's heart ; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand ;" "The way of a man is not in himself : it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

4. Past conduct exciting amazement, arousing anger, and forcing a decision.

Ahasuerus, when brought face to face with his own acts and their consequences, is filled with amazement. He had thought to strike down the Jews, caring little for their anguish and having no sympathy with them in their trials. Lo, in striking a blow at the cottage he has shaken the foundations of happiness in the palace ; in directing a weapon against the hated Jew he has wounded the endeared queen. To find that his welfare is so inwoven with that of the Jews that he cannot disregard their interests without imperilling his own, fills him with anxiety. That one's own happiness is linked with that of others is a lesson which all are slow to learn—especially kings. In human society the interests of all are so associated that wrong to one member measurably affects the welfare of all. This none should question. Interests are common. The success of all is involved in the success of each ; the happiness of each, measurably in that of all. From the lowest grade of society to the highest, from the laborer in the mines to the sovereign on the throne, the same life-current flows ; "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." The topmost branch of the cedar is kissed by the sunlight and waves in the breeze. For its majesty and beauty it does not seem dependent upon roots hidden in the soil

beneath ; but sever those roots and the head will soon droop. Its graceful movements seem in no way conditioned upon the presence of the lower branches, but when the tempest has wrenched away a few of these, not only is the symmetry destroyed, but the trunk, bleeding at the open wounds, communicates tremor to the loftiest leaflet.

Amazement is succeeded by anger. Greatly agitated and impelled by rage, the king hastens into the garden to afford an opportunity for the excitement to subside, and to concentrate his thoughts upon some method of deliverance out of encircling difficulties. If company has its charms, so also has solitude. If the counsel of friends is sometimes advantageous, undisturbed meditation is no less so. Perhaps our first impulse is to condemn Ahasuerus for giving way to anger ; and yet, possibly, we ought to regard him as evincing more self-control now than he evinced when he said, "The people are given to thee, to do with them as seemeth good to thee." Under malign influence then, he prefers to take counsel with himself now. It may be he is ashamed to consult his nobles. He who perceives that he has brought trouble upon himself is disposed to reticence.

Amid the stings of self-reproach he is forced to decide between Haman and Esther. An emergency is upon him. Responsibility must be assumed. Within the limits of the kingdom there is not a more unhappy man than he, although there are many, it may be, who are subject to despondency because their weary feet are compelled to tread the humbler walks of life. External condition is no indication of the state of the heart. Alexander the Great was discontented because ivy would not grow in his gardens at Babylon ; Diogenes was wiser, who finding a mouse in his satchel, said, "I am not so

poor but poorer creatures are glad of my leavings." Happiness may have her envied home where economy spreads her frugal board and humble station shields from the necessity of assuming the responsibility of deciding perplexing questions, questions which, however decided, are certain to sow seeds of future regret. The responsibilities of exalted station may render the occupant miserable to an extent scarcely conceivable by those whose days are passed in the sheltered nooks of human society. What shall Ahasuerus do, now the crisis is upon him? "The wine is drawn, it must be drunk." One must be sacrificed, Haman or Esther. His prime-minister must be disgraced, his own character tarnished, a royal edict reversed, or the queen and her people must perish. No marvel he entered his garden and paced hither and thither, endeavoring to decide what course to pursue.

Are we not called upon to concede that there is mystery in God's permitting a crisis in the history of his church? Are we not forced to ask, Why does he allow the interests of religion to become imperilled? Why is the deliverance of persecuted goodness suspended on agencies apparently so inadequate? Why do emergencies arise which, except for Divine interposition, would issue in disaster to the church, if not in her annihilation? Perhaps we are justified in finding a solution to these perplexing questions by assuming that in no other way could our dependence upon Divine interposition be more clearly indicated. In the days of Noah, when wickedness had nearly overrun the world, God rescued his church by overwhelming her enemies. When idolatry had become universal, he called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees and organized the church in his family. When the oppressions in Egypt threatened the extinction of the Jewish religion, if not indeed of the covenant peo-

ple, he commissioned Moses to conduct his kindred to the land of promise, effecting deliverance for the persecuted by destroying the persecutors. When his worship, owing to the destruction of the temple, seemed likely to pass into oblivion, he raised up Cyrus, who gave his Jewish subjects permission to rebuild the sanctuary and to repair the walls round about Jerusalem. In a subsequent age, when Phariseeism had nearly extinguished piety by burdening it with ceremonies, he sent his Son, who effected deliverance for religion by breaking in pieces the incrustations in which its life had become imprisoned. In the time of Luther, he delivered his church, according to its success in repelling the encroachments of a system which sought to destroy religious liberty that it might blend sensuous worship with unresisting obedience to the mandates of "Holy Father." In these instances, and in others as well, deliverance was effected under conditions and by agencies which indicate the hand of an overruling Providence.

The narrative also furnishes an illustration of the number and the grandeur of the results which one person is capable of effecting. Bacon revolutionized philosophy, giving a new impulse to physical science. Franklin gave us the electric telegraph, which ere long will no doubt "put a girdle round the world." Watt bequeathed us the steam-engine, which has imparted new life to the commercial world. Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood, and as was natural suffered persecution for being in advance of his age. Esther's determination to secure the abrogation of the fatal decree, consigned Haman to the gallows, raised Mordecai to the office of prime-minister, and rescued the Jews from death by the hands of their enemies, preserving a nation from civil war. In view of such consequences, suspended upon the

courage of a woman, let no one who is laboring in the interests of humanity give way to despondency, however numerous the difficulties which environ him. One resolute heart, with faith in God and devotion to the well-being of society, is a match for the enemies of the church, however numerous, malicious and defiant they may be. No amount of hostility can effect the destruction of the church. Against her foundations the waves of malice dash themselves into quietness. The tempests may rage, the darkness may become intense; in the succeeding calm, as the sunlight gilds the edifice, revealing beauty without and glory within, her corner-stones will be found still resting on the immovable rock.

Nor should we fail to observe that the penalties of wickedness, however long deferred, are certain to overtake the offender. Since justice is resistless and has an eternity in which to vindicate its honor, it can well afford to move with dignity and to approach its victim with footsteps as noiseless as those of charity. Though delay in arriving may enable the guilty to reach an honorable position and to encircle himself by influences which seem fitted to shield him from the arrows of retribution, these circumstances shall only tend to render the disaster more conspicuous and to enhance the subsequent anguish.

IX.

RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.

“ Nature has her laws,
That will not brook infringement ; in all time,
All circumstances, all states, in every clime,
She holds aloft the same avenging sword ;
And sitting on her boundless throne sublime,
The vials of her wrath with justice stored,
Shall, in her own good hour, on all that’s ill be poured.”

JAMES GATES PERCIVAL.

THERE are natural objects in the presence of which we are filled with awe. Passing by those toward which the mind more naturally reverts (the wonders concealed in the depths of the ocean, the marvels of the mineral kingdom, the planets that float in the fields of immensity) we may be excused for pausing in the presence of the awe-inspiring productions of the vegetable world. Admiration gives place to astonishment as we examine some of these—for example, the noted baobab tree of Senegal. Of enormous size, being thirty feet in diameter, and of great age, dating back (5250 years) as early as the erection of the pyramids, it possesses a grandeur which cannot fail to impress those who reflect upon the brevity of human existence.

More venerable still is the ancient cypress in the gardens of Chapultepec, Mexico.* It had attained to a

* Its age cannot be less, it is affirmed, than 6000 years ; indeed, some, basing their calculations upon its diameter, forty and a half

great age prior to the reign of the unhappy Montezuma, the glory of whose kingdom was extinguished in blood by Cortes, when as yet savages roamed over the fields now turned by the ploughshare of the Saxon. In comparison with its antiquity, Babylon and Nineveh, Tyre and "the eternal city on her seven hills" were children of yesterday. It looked down upon the rise, development, and decay of empires. It must have been old at the period when unclothed savages roamed through the forests of Europe, when the ancient Celtic race was erecting the tumuli which have excited the wonder of succeeding ages, when the gates of ancient Troy were consumed by fire and "unhappy Priam" wandered through the streets of his burning capital. It is a representative of eternity. Antiquity has its home in its boughs. There is grandeur in the swaying of its trunk. The history of the vegetable kingdom and the unchangeable character of her laws are written in its branches, for they were annually clothed with leaves. The immutability of law, how discernible amid changes as numerous as the years—indeed, as countless as the swayings of its pliable branches. Changelessness amid changes as frequent as the fleeting moments !

I call your attention, however, to that which is more venerable and more changeless amid surrounding changes

feet, and assigning fifty rings of annual growth to the inch, compute its age at 24,000 years ; others, assigning from ninety-five to one hundred and twenty rings of annual growth to the inch, make its age from 46,170 to 58,320 years. This seems incredible. Either computation antedates by centuries, if not by decades of centuries, the origin of any kingdom known in history. The breezes of at least 2000 years must have rustled through its branches ere Abraham journeyed from Ur of the Chaldees.

than either cypress or mahogany, ironwood or courbaril. The branches of these may have battled with the storms of centuries, and their roots may have girdled the rocks ; but that to which I invite attention antedates the law of vegetable life, and is destined to continuance after every forest, even the most enduring, has mouldered back to dust. I desire you should contemplate with me a decree, coming forth from eternity and issuing into eternity—the law of retribution. The stateliness with which it rolls along the centuries is well fitted to impress us with awe ; its sweep, embracing the universe, is adapted to remind us of man's insignificance. Holding the emblems of eternity in one hand and the balances of justice in the other, it produces a conviction of the futility of offering resistance. In her footprints is legible the declaration, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." With eternity as a father and omnipotence as an attendant, naught can prevent her enforcement of penalties. She but speaks and it is done. She commands and it stands fast.

The law of retributive justice is as changeless in character as it is venerable in antiquity. Even the most enduring tree is subject to mutation and must decay. The mountains, even those which first emerged above the waters, shall yet melt, leaving only chaos to mark their site. The law of retribution, however, alters not, nor will time chronicle its abrogation. A connection indestructible exists between the violation of law and consequent misery. A disregard to the conditions of health entails sickness, perhaps death. Poisons destroy human life. Bodies unsupported fall to the earth, no human will being capable of abrogating the law. Fire burns, and consequently to thrust one's hand into the flames is to invite suffering, no subsequent conduct being capable

of exempting from the endurance of the penalty. That men are placed under physical laws is certainly too evident to need illustration, and yet there are not a few who seem disposed to ignore the fact that these forces which are in operation must produce their effects. Consequently, they neglect to bring themselves into conformity therewith. The inexorableness of law is a truth belonging to that class of truths which, because accepted by all, loses its potency with many.

Changelessness also marks the operations of moral law. Its transgression is followed by suffering. Remorse is entailed by doing what one knows to be wrong. A sense of humiliation succeeds an unreasonable outburst of anger. Loss of happiness, of self-respect and of the esteem of the good are a portion of the legacy of self-indulgence. Thus, in many instances, we find little difficulty in tracing the connection between sin and suffering; and even where the connection eludes discovery there are often attendant circumstances which remind one of former transgressions.

There are cases, it is true, in which we cannot trace any connection, even the most remote, between the disasters one is suffering, and the transgressions of which he has been guilty. It does not follow, however, that there is no thread which unites them; much less that the calamities would have occurred had there been no antecedent iniquity. The book of Job and the instructions of our Saviour leave no doubt that afflictions are mainly disciplinary in their nature and not penal; but is any life so faultless that no evil remains to be eliminated? that there is no opportunity for the ministrations of suffering?

Nor is it less evident that there are instances in which so far as man can discern sins pass unpunished. If there

are those who are enduring anguish, though by no means as heinous sinners as others, so also are there those who enjoy the sunshine of prosperity, though their lives are stained by many aggravated crimes. Are we then to conclude that the theory of retribution is baseless? By no means, for delay in the execution of penalties does not justify us in concluding that law has been abrogated. Who dares affirm that the links which unite sin and penalty may not extend beyond this life, being concealed from view beneath the waves of death? We are all ready to acknowledge that only a small portion of God's government comes within the range of our present observation. The Revealed Word, which connects punishment with transgression, also promises rewards to those who obey divine commands. "He that believeth shall be saved." "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." "He that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life."

We should err, however, were we to infer that a knowledge of this law of retribution is dependent upon Revelation. Since the infidel as well as the Christian accepts the theory that punishment is connected with transgression, it is manifest that our convictions are not a result of our accepting the Word of God. Belief in the theory of retributive justice is inwoven with human nature. Graven on the conscience, it cannot be effaced. In reference to the extent of the law, its severity and its continuance, differences of opinion exist, it is true; but there are scarcely any, even among savages, who do not believe in its supremacy. The abandoned may sin; wilfully violating law, they may set their hearts to iniquity because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; but it does not follow that they have surren-

dered faith in the inviolability of moral law. They may recognize its violation as sins which merit penalties.

A settled faith in the doctrine of retribution is what we might expect. To secure the conviction we have only to watch the occurrences of every-day life, tracing effects back to their causes. We can scarcely fail to note instances in which those who wronged others have been themselves wronged; those who maligned others have found their own names loaded with infamy; those who invaded the rights of others have been compelled to endure an infringement of their own; those who neglected dependent parents have been dishonored by their children; those who despised the poor have been forced into the struggle to maintain the appearances of competency while poverty was crushing the spirit into despondency. We find little difficulty in discovering some who, after ruining others, have received retribution as they endeavored to bury the memory of a friend dead to honor, or as they leaned forward to drop a tear on the coffin of a brother lost to hope; little difficulty in pointing to those who, while priding themselves in their ill-gotten gains, have become the victims of a species of rascality which recalls the recollection of past dishonesties; little trouble in meeting victims of inebriety or of sensuality who, in their brutalized features, present evidence that sins almost forgotten may reappear in their consequences to render age a burden and existence a curse.

The force of the testimony deducible from such living attestations to the doctrine of retribution is enhanced, if we pause to direct attention to instances conspicuous in history. Examples are numerous in profane biography as well as in sacred. If it is allowable to select one from many, we are perhaps excusable for instancing the case

of James, England's unhappy monarch. Surrounding himself with unprincipled courtiers, he disregarded the rights of his subjects, practising tyranny, cruelty and duplicity. The day of vengeance came. Betrayed by those whom his favor had raised from obscurity, hated by a people who once idolized him, and despised by his friends, he was driven from the throne, dying in exile, unhonored, unlamented, contemned. Retribution, though coming with noiseless footsteps, overtook him. Justice, though waiting long, meted out to him the penalty of his guilt. In early life he disregarded the rights of others; in old age, defenceless, friendless, homeless, he found no one to regard him. Refusing to honor those deserving honor, he sank so low that few were base enough to do him reverence.

For illustrations of this unfailing connection between sin and suffering we do not need to search uninspired records. Revelation furnishes us examples in abundance. Of these, few are more worthy of consideration than that of Haman, as presented in the portion of the narrative under review. It furnishes three topics :

1. The channel through which retribution comes.
2. A fruitless prayer for deliverance.
3. The signs of coming doom.

1. The harvest is garnered, how shall the grain reach the sea-board? Along iron rails laid down by man. The rice-fields are gleaned, how shall the product be conveyed to its destination? Through canals cut by man's agency. The fruit of the orchard is gathered, by what agencies shall it be conveyed to the tables of consumers? Through middle-men who forward the packages stamped with indications of their own individuality. The fruits of malice, of cruelty, of ambition, of tyranny, are perfected, how shall they be delivered to him for

whom they are designed? Through agencies he himself has prepared.

As might be expected, the consequences of Haman's acts flow through avenues he himself has opened. Justice, as she comes freighted with the penalties of violated law, moves along channels which a man's own exertions have cut. It is true that retribution is prepared in heaven, but in coming to earth it traverses the road man has prepared for it. The lightning, though forged in the clouds, may make, as it comes to earth, a pathway of the tree planted by human hands. Haman's wickedness is so conspicuous that the shafts of retributive justice are certain to strike him, miss whom else they may. Oppression and heartlessness, cherished hatred and the spirit of revenge are towering upward to such heights that their summits are hidden in clouds black with fury. Can they fail to receive the discharge of Heaven's wrath? And when Divine vengeance begins to move earthward, can it be diverted from its course? Can it miss Haman?

"Ashes fly back into the face of him who throws them." No less certainly do the arrows which the malicious person hurls rebound upon him.

"Punishment is lame, but it comes;" nor does it ever wander from the pathway which conducts to the guilty.

"God grinds late, but he grinds to powder;" nor does anything go into the hopper but what has been prepared for grinding, and what it will be beneficial to the universe to have ground.

The particular person designated of Heaven to mete out retribution to the doomed Haman is Ahasuerus. The penalties were decreed in the court of inflexible justice, but upon Persia's monarch devolves the duty of determining the form they shall assume and of deliver-

ing them to the offender. Is not this in accordance with God's usual methods of dealing? Do not our trials ordinarily come through human channels? Though accompanied with evidence of having issued from the court of Divine Sovereignty, they come clothed in human language. Though bearing the seal of the invisible kingdom, they are delivered by some agency with which we are familiar.

But ere Ahasuerus can become the instrument of inflicting punishment, there must be a change in his feelings. Suspicion must displace confidence. Hatred must succeed to affection. These changes indignation can soon effect. Nor is it proper to pass unqualified condemnation upon those outbursts of anger which proceed from the unexpected discovery of a series of deliberate wrongs. Indignant protest against wickedness is a virtue. "Be ye angry and sin not." A righteous detestation of iniquity is an element of religion. Without this one would sink to a condition as pitiable as it is unreasonable. An indisposition to resent certain forms of personal injury may be accepted as evidence of cowardice. These statements few question; but alas; we need to be on our guard lest we manifest more readiness to vent anger against those whom we adjudge guilty of invading our rights than against acts which are evident violations of Divine law. The disposition to avenge one's self is a very different thing from righteous indignation of sinful conduct. Anger which prompts to retaliation is sinful; that which results from sympathy with justice, and seeks to repress crime by visiting it with penalties, is akin to the indignation of him who has caused it to be written, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

The king showed good judgment in one respect at

least—in maintaining silence during the earlier stages of his anger. With words, as with other marketable commodities, an over-supply causes a depreciation in the value attached to them. From the record it does not appear that he uttered one word when Haman's wickedness was revealed to him. It is simply affirmed, "In his wrath he went into the palace-garden." This speaks well for the king, but is ominous of evil for the prime-minister. Anger, which speedily vents itself in harsh words, is less harmful to its object than that which is repressed till a purpose is formed. Fear the man who can so far control his resentment as to be able to exercise good judgment in deciding upon measures which shall bring the results of deeds home to their authors. How many there are who are seemingly oblivious to the fact that success in life is dependent in great measure upon the opinion entertained of them by others, especially by those who, though indulging in no angry words, are unconquerable in their determination that the violators of Divine law shall incur the consequences. Explosions of rage are harmless, but anger, fed by the conviction that a wrong has been perpetrated, and employed in holding the evil-doer to the results of his acts, may become an instrumentality in rendering the object toward which it is directed as miserable as his conduct has been unreasonable. The steam which is generated so speedily as to cause a violent explosion, destroying the life of the engineer, might have proved sufficient, if judiciously expended, to convey a train freighted with the enginery of death to some advantageous position whence every missile would have told with deadly effect upon the enemy.

2. A fruitless plea for deliverance.

Perceiving that evil was decreed against him, Haman stood up to make request for his life. He who had

consigned thousands to death by a single decree is now pleading for mercy. He who despised the Jews and hated them with an intensity begotten of prejudice is imploring the boon of continued existence. Verily, no man can tell what awaits him ! A few days, a few hours may suffice to cloud the most brilliant prospects. The question, What new acquisition is possible ? may be converted into the anxious inquiry, Can I save anything from the common wreck, even life itself ?

Despairing of success, the suppliant casts himself beside the dining couch upon which the queen was reclining. Hopelessness has rendered him frantic. He is deaf to the admonitions of prudence. A posture is assumed which may fan the anger of the king into fury, or at least may furnish a pretext for the infliction of heavy penalties. His terror in the hour of trial impels to an act of familiarity which the king will not pardon. Insolent beyond measure in the season of prosperity, he is abject to an inexcusable degree in the hour of adversity. A fit type is he of a class seldom rare—those who are cruel when they have power, contemptibly abject and disgustingly penitent when naught is left but a plea for pardon. With this phase of human nature they become familiar whom duty calls to consider pleas for the remission of legal penalties.

Haman's prayer, though no doubt importunate, was fruitless. The arrival of retribution chronicles the departure of mercy. When the flood came the angel who proffers pardon folded his wings and hasted away, leaving a doomed world to its fate. The historian informs us that when Jerusalem's day of grace had ended, voices were heard, as of one angel saying to another, "Let us depart." This at least is certain: the city was filled with horrors—mothers ate their infant children—unbur-

ied bodies were breeding contagion—half-famished men were creeping from the gates at night and gnawing roots and bits of leather to mitigate the pangs of hunger—Mount Zion ran with blood—corpses were piled one upon another, blocking up the avenues to the sacred courts—the temple was consumed by fire—the site upon which it stood was afterward turned by the ploughshare of the Romans—those of the inhabitants who survived the desolation were either led into captivity or scattered among the surrounding nations, “a hissing and a by-word.” Let obduracy therefore remember that a time may arrive when mercy shall yield her place to retributive justice. The immunity shown to the transgressions of Divine law is not endless. Justice may move with measured step ; it comes at last.

It is, moreover, worthy of note that in the presence of the king the queen is powerless to rescue the culprit. He is now before the judge whose will is Esther’s law ; in whose decision she will concur—each being committed to maintain government and to visit punishment upon wickedness. In the day of final adjudication, when the Saviour shall surrender his kingdom to the Father, it will no doubt be evident that mercy is powerless to rescue those who have incurred “the wrath of the Lamb.” By despising Divine tenderness they have rendered deliverance impossible, having forced gentleness to acquiesce in the infliction of penalties. When mercy is driven to assume an attitude of vengeance, hope is extinguished.

Esther was prompt in showing kindness to her enemy ; slow in securing visitations of wrath. She invited him to a banquet with the king. Considering the exigencies of her situation, she waited long ere she took measures for the punishment of Haman’s crimes. Is not the King of kings slow to anger and plenteous in mercy ? As has

been eloquently said, "When mercy comes to earth she driveth winged steeds; her chariot wheels are glowing hot with speed; but when wrath comes it walks with tardy footsteps; it is not in haste to slay, it is not swift to condemn. God's rod of mercy is in his hand outstretched; his sword of justice is in its scabbard."

The disposition of our Heavenly Father to delay the day of vengeance is manifest in the forbearance shown toward Adam and Eve in Eden. They sinned. Was God in haste to punish them? Nay, he came to his fallen creatures in the cool of the day. Even then he did not come driving the steeds of avenging justice. "He walked in the garden." He did not exclaim in tones of harshness, "Rebel, die;" but asked, "Adam, where art thou?" He did not shout, "Mercy's day is past; vengeance has come;" but whispered, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

God's tenderness toward Adam is indeed ample evidence of forbearing mercy, but his subsequent dealings with the human family are a still more conspicuous illustration of long-suffering patience. Humanity has been writing its history in crimes that have called for punishment, in wars that have enriched battle-fields, in oaths that have disgraced indecency itself, in dishonesties that have sent measureless anguish into innocent homes, in debaucheries that have given painful evidence that man is but one remove from the brute, in calumnies that have rendered society a whirlpool of angry contention and embittered feeling. Still he permits the world to go reeling forward in her frenzy; yea, pours upon its inhabitants the full horn of plenty and dispenses the blessings of gratuitous salvation. Man's continued existence is proof of Divine compassion.

As an evidence of forbearance, witness God's dealings

with Tyre. He bore with her till her idolatry and impiety became a loathing in the sight of Heaven and an abomination in the eyes of men. Ere he commissioned his prophets to predict her overthrow, he permitted her to fill her cup of woe to the brim. True, he destroyed her, but the waves of the Mediterranean, while singing a requiem to the memory of her dead, whisper of long-suffering patience.

“Slow to wrath” is the testimony which comes from the site of ancient Sodom. She was allowed to sin till even the sense of shame was lost. Nor did he overwhelm the city in destruction till he had sent angels to warn those who might be disposed to seek deliverance. When patience could bear with its sins no longer, flames descended from heaven and the plain smoked with the fury of an incensed God. Consumed by the fires of vengeance and submerged beneath the waves of the Dead Sea, she became a witness to the fact that though God is slow to anger, he is fearful in wrath, that though merciful, he is also just. Her ashes lie buried in oblivion. The cause of her doom is written across the heavens once lighted by the flames of her burning dwellings.

Perhaps in amazement we ask, Why does retribution approach with such tardy footsteps? Because God thereby reserves time to threaten often before he strikes once. So did he with the antediluvian world. He warned them often. Prophet succeeded to prophet; still sin went on increasing. For one hundred and twenty years Noah preached the necessity of repentance. All in vain—not one convert did he make outside of his own family—nor was he very successful with his own children, not eminently so with himself. He was only permitted to see warnings disregarded, and threatenings contemned. At length retribution came—a world of sinners perished.

Disheartened laborer for God, take courage ; your efforts have not been as unavailing as were Noah's.

God threatens often before the sword of vengeance is drawn from its scabbard. How frequent the warnings sent to Pharaoh ! Miracle came fast upon miracle. Threatening rapidly succeeded threatening. It was not till man's patience would have been exhausted that God withdrew his hand, converting the waters, which he had held back in crystal walls to make a pathway for his people, into a grave for their pursuers, leaving Pharaoh and his host, chariots and horsemen, footmen and cavaliers, to sink like lead in the mighty abyss.

Why is sentence against an evil work not executed speedily ? That if possible mercy may still effect deliverance. He first exhausts all other means—reason, shame, love, every agency—in his effort to secure obedience. Not till these have proved unavailing does he lift his rod in anger and visit penalties upon wickedness.

Why does God bear so long with iniquity ? That when the punishment comes every mouth may be stopped ; all, self-condemned—speechless.

Haman abused Esther's forbearance—the obdurate abuse God's long-suffering patience. Is it because retribution will not come ? Nay, but simply because its arrival is delayed. If God sent the penalty as soon as sin is committed—if the hand that struck the angry blow instantly fell lifeless by the side, if the tongue that spoke the falsehood was immediately paralyzed in the mouth, if the lips that uttered blasphemies became at once motionless, if the first excess was followed by delirium, if licentiousness sent instant rottenness into the bones—then no doubt men would consider. Ungrateful man continues in transgression because Divine patience is not yet exhausted. Is not this preparing anguish for the day of

anguish? heaping up wrath against the day of wrath? pouring contempt upon Him in whose hands we are held much as Paul held the venomous beast over the crackling flames? Why such folly? Ah, it is assumed that mercy can be secured at any hour. Fatal delusion! Haman pleaded in vain. "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hands and no man regarded; . . . ye shall call upon me, but I will not answer; ye shall seek me, but ye shall not find me."

It is imagined, perchance, that if God will not hearken, it is at least possible by repentance to wipe out the stains of sin, without the cleansing efficacy of Christ's blood. Can penitence obliterate the effects of iniquity? No. Will an amended life atone for past transgressions? No. The evil is done, can simple repentance undo it? Will the foul stain depart at man's bidding? Obduracy responds, "Possibly not, but God is merciful." Yes, and he is also just.

3. The signs of coming doom.

Government must be maintained. Ahasuerus must punish wickedness or his authority is at an end. If one may usurp the prerogatives of the king and consign enemies to destruction, what is to hinder another from doing the same? If the will of every ambitious man within the realm is to become law, anarchy will reign. When a check upon wickedness seems indispensable to the maintenance of divine government it is not long ere retribution is meted out. Of this we have an illustration in God's dealings with the Canaanites. Twice two centuries he bore with them, till the period arrived when his authority must be vindicated. Lo, in an unexpected hour, desolate Ai and burning Jericho bear testimony to his determination to punish iniquity. Since the veracity of our Heavenly Father is suspended on the infliction of

merited penalties, we may be certain that when wickedness is imperilling the continuance of government, retribution draweth nigh.

Innocence must now be vindicated ; defiant wickedness punished. Haman's sinful career must be checked, or the queen perishes. There comes a time when goodness is liable to be overwhelmed, unless sin is visited with penalties. Accordingly, visitations of Divine wrath may be indispensable to the prosperity of the church—indeed, to its continuance. Wickedness unchecked would ultimately extinguish goodness—would people heaven itself with those writhing in the agonies of self-purchased misery. Consequently, it is apparent to all that the love God bears his chosen ones necessitates the confinement of the wicked within the prison-house of anguish. Thistles and grass cannot continue to occupy the same field for an indefinite period of time ; nor is it doubtful which will gain the mastery. In like manner, vice, if unrestrained, being exempt from punishment, would, ere long—certainly ere eternity's sands run out—eradicate virtue and, lifting high the flood-gates of iniquity, would deluge the universe.

Guilt is left to bear the penalty alone. “ As the word went out of the king's mouth they covered Haman's face.” To the courtiers, it is a matter of indifference whether they robe Haman for a pageant or cover his face as a sign that death has been decreed against him. Alas the heartlessness of those who are comrades in iniquity ! No ties are so easily snapped as those which unite the wicked. No ingratitude surpasses that manifested by those who have been associated in transgression.

To be deserted in the critical hour is the fate which awaits those who violate divine commands. Harbonah, though he may have courted the royal favorite in the

days of advancing greatness, is the first to desert him, giving a desperate push to the man whom he sees standing on the verge of a precipice: "Behold the gallows fifty cubits high which Haman made for Mordecai." How little confidence may be reposed in those whose highest ambition is the retention of man's favor! Their flattery, especially when exhibited in the days of one's prosperity, is a prophecy of the baseness they are likely to manifest in the season of adversity. Prostrating themselves at your feet when this promises advancement, they are ready for betrayal when this best serves their purpose.

In the day of final adjudication, man's refuges, even those which seem secure now, will fail, leaving him defenceless before the oncoming tides of wrath.

"Hang him thereon," shouted the enraged monarch. "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." He is snared in his own devices. The arrow he directed at another has rebounded, causing his own death. The cannon which, loaded to the muzzle, was to have annihilated his enemy, has recoiled, crushing him beneath its wheels. With rare exceptions, malice injures him who indulges it more than it injures the person toward whom it is directed. Let those, therefore, who through weary years have been enduring the shafts of hatred, tutor themselves to await the hour when justice shall vindicate the innocent and punish the guilty.

"The mills of God grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small;
With patience he stands waiting,
With exactness grinds he all."

The narrative is a confirmation of the assertion of our Lord, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Of Haman it may be said, "As he

brewed, so he drank :'' '' He made his bed, and he lay in it.'' As an agency in deterring us from harshness in our treatment of others, let us treasure in memory the truth contained in the proverb, '' Kill and thou shalt be killed, and they shall kill him who kills thee.'' Enmity can only result in disaster. Cruelty displayed can ordinarily have but one issue—cruelty endured.

A closing reflection : It is scarcely to be expected that man should perceive harmony between the attributes of an infinite God, especially between mercy and justice. The two seem in conflict ; but is it inconceivable that they should harmonize in a character too lofty for our full appreciation, a character which tempers justice with mercy, and displays mercy without infringing the prerogatives of justice—ininitely merciful, infinitely just—the former because he is the latter ? The great God is to man, sunk as he is in sin, necessarily invisible, and in measure incomprehensible. Christ is his visible image, is the infinite brought within the comprehension of the finite, is Deity veiled in human form, '' the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person.'' For the proper appreciation of this reflex of the Father's glory, preparation is needed in us, a measure of perfection being requisite to the appreciation of perfection. Ability to perceive goodness and the proper union of justice and mercy in our own characters are indispensable to a perception of these attributes in Deity. As the savage feels no emotion of beauty, though his eye may be resting upon a picture which glows with the soul of genius ; as the uncultured beholder discerns no grandeur in the shaft to which the chisel has given power ; as the Hottentot perceives no harmony in the matchless symphonies of Beethoven, so we, as long as we remain unillumined by the spirit and uncultured by grace, are in measure incapable

of appreciating the grandest conception that thrills human souls—Deity, possessing infinite tenderness and unswerving justice.

Heavenly Father, lift us heavenward. Open our eyes to behold thy greatness. Of thy justice give us a view which does not eclipse thy mercy. Of thy compassion grant us a vision which does not obscure the throne whose pillars rest on eternal rectitude. So shall we be less likely to abuse thy mercy, and better qualified to render homage to thee for the blessings we receive. So shall we be less likely to be startled in the day when retributive justice is meting out its long-deferred penalties, and more reconciled, meanwhile, to this state of existence in which we often see mercy despised and justice insulted.

Oh the horror that shall appall the soul of him whose heart has been set on doing evil, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily! Retribution—history, reason, observation, conscience, testify to its existence.

X.

FRUITS OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

“ I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

“ And so beside the silent sea
I wait the muffled oar ;
No harm from him can come to me,
On ocean or on shore.”

J. G. WHITTIER.

IN life's theatre it often happens that the noise produced in shifting the scenes renders the participants oblivious to external sounds, however loud they may be. The din near by is so great that God's voice cannot be heard even when he thunders.

Withdrawing for a period from the bustle incident to the changes that are taking place, let us enter into communion with God, and listening for voices from heaven trace, if possible, the hand of Providence in the events that have passed under review ; so shall we be better fitted to witness the final act in this thrilling drama. We shall thus be better qualified to perceive, and more disposed to acknowledge, that man's extremity is God's opportunity ; that God's time for effecting deliverance—though his purposes run parallel with the events—does not arrive till man's agencies have proved unavailing. Until man feels his need, God's time has not come for

giving efficacy to instrumentalities already prepared. At the feast in Cana of Galilee, Christ did not convert the water into wine till the beverage prepared by human hands was exhausted.

To gather up the threads of providence, contained in this narrative subsequent to Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman, and to unite them into a cord which may be recognized as the agency through which deliverance for the Jewish Church was effected, is our present purpose. As in the preceding portion of the story, so in this, the hand of God is frequently apparent, especially to those who strive to recognize it.

It was evidently providential that Haman's injured pride should swell, like a cankered sore, into such resentment that he thought it beneath his dignity to take vengeance upon Mordecai alone. Had he contented himself with crushing the porter at the gate, he might have remained prime-minister ; and the king, still reposing confidence in him, could scarcely have been induced to enrich the queen at the expense of the vizier ; nor is it probable that Persia's pride would have been humiliated by the promulgation of a second edict, or that the Jews would have had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day in every province and in every city, or that the church would have secured deliverance from her enemies, and accessions from the people of the land.

After securing royal sanction to the fatal edict, as if inspired of Heaven to consummate his own destruction, Haman could not await the arrival of the day when the law would place the Jews within his power, but must be fanning the flames of hatred till he is moved to erect a gallows for Mordecai. With the power of self-control, he might have attained such influence with the monarch as to have alienated royal affection from Esther, and

might have delivered himself from a felon's death, living to gaze with delight upon the massacre of his enemies. Heaven, however, ordered otherwise. Haman cannot rest till he has made preparation for the execution of Mordecai. It was the malignity of his disposition and the unreasonable haste that exasperated the king.

By a seeming providence it happens that on a certain night sleep refuses to be courted by Ahasuerus. Had he spent those few hours in slumber, a knowledge of his porter's loyalty could scarcely have been communicated to him ere Haman presented the death-warrant for subscription. Consequently, the result might have been different. Mordecai might not have received honor in being escorted through the streets of Shushann nor Haman humiliation in being forced to herald the promotion of one whom he detested.

Upon how slender a thread Mordecai's honors are suspended ! His life hangs upon the turn of a leaf ! Providentially, the reader's eye rests upon a record of conspiracy against the king. The reading of any other portion of the Persian chronicles would have left Mordecai at the mercy of his enemy—to perish on the morrow. Moreover, the Jewish church might have been extinguished, within the limits of the Persian empire at least.

Esther presents herself before the king. In this we can scarcely fail to perceive the hand of God. When we consider the circumstances in which she was placed, and the improbability, humanly speaking, that her suit would prove successful, we marvel at the self-sacrificing spirit she manifested. To what extent this was the result of her own devotions, or Heaven's gift in answer to prayer, it is impossible to determine ; but she was quite manifestly following the leadings of Providence, hoping apparently to verify the conjecture of her guardian, that she had been

raised to honor for the purpose of rescuing her countrymen. Lo, all her hopes are suspended upon the humor of the arrogant sovereign ! Is it presumptuous to affirm that He who often determines the purposes of kings may have induced Ahasuerus to extend the sceptre, disposing him to grant pardon for the intrusion and to promise compliance with the queen's request ? An angry impulse, which was entirely possible, and would have been in accordance with the monarch's disposition, might have sealed Esther's fate, as Vashti's was. The friends of Judaism might have been overwhelmed, for when once an arbitrary sovereign has committed himself there is slight hope of reversing his decision.

Apparently, it was a part of the Divine purpose to afford a triumph to the church as well as to defeat Haman's scheme for the execution of Mordecai. Accordingly, the prime-minister is permitted to attain the highest honors, his seat being above the princes and nobles. He is allowed to pride himself on being invited to enter with the king to the queen's banquet ; to flatter himself that his influence with the monarch is so great that he may safely erect a gallows for his enemy, even before he has requested permission to execute him. His pride must become colossal, his crimes revolting, and his hatred of the Jews intense, in order that his fall may become so complete as not only to rescue the porter, but to preserve the Jewish religion from annihilation. Is there no providence in allowing him to go so far in wickedness that the resentment of the king, when once aroused, shall prove sufficient to undo all that has been done against the Jewish nation ? The pendulum swings so far in this direction because it has previously swung so far in the opposite. The enemy of the Jews falls from a position so lofty, to disgrace so overwhelming, that those whom he contemned

are borne upward to honor, even as worth rises when vanity falls, as justice becomes prominent when injustice is eating the fruit of its own doings. God exalts the lowly by debasing the exalted ; he lifts up the oppressed by crushing the oppressor. As witnessed in the history of the world, he often permits arrogance and wickedness to become excessive ere he employs the agencies he has prepared for their destruction.

There is still, to appearances, a barrier to the preservation of the church—the irreversible decree. There is a providence even in this ; for, had the decree been reversible the destruction might indeed have been averted, but the Jews would not have been sanctioned in taking vengeance on their enemies. Moreover, Providence so times the issue of the second decree as to afford opportunity to prepare for defence. Consequently, the defeat of the enemies of the church lays a firm foundation for its future security. “If you suffer the calf to be laid on your shoulders they will soon clap on the cow ;” but ere you sink under the burden, Providence may impose calamities upon your tormentors.

A REWARD BESTOWED UPON WORTH.

The suddenness with which, by a rapid succession of providences, a complete revolution is sometimes effected in the history of nations or in the fortunes of individuals, is often quite startling. An empire which only long centuries have sufficed to establish may perish in a day. An estate which represents a lifetime of self-denial may melt away in a few hours. A reputation which is the result of years of toil may vanish as speedily as the passing cloud. Each may seem firmly established and securely founded, destined, apparently, to perpetuity. A slight turn in fortune’s wheel may suffice, however,

to topple them to the ground, leaving only ruin where once grandeur was, or sorrowful memories where stood a throne of power, founded seemingly on an immovable basis.

The existence of a law of retributive justice, whereby worth is rewarded and wickedness punished, is the key to the solution of these mysteries. Eternal rectitude has decreed that merit must be recompensed, and that iniquity shall incur deserved penalties.

Consequently, we marvel not that Haman's property, immediately after his execution, was made over to Esther. Whether we view this as evidence of the monarch's fickle disposition, or as a compensation for wrongs endured by the queen, we can scarcely fail to perceive that Providence is aiding justice in rewarding merit, wickedness having been punished. The gift of the king may have been designed as a recompense for the anxiety to which his heartless conduct had subjected Esther, or as an expression of gratitude for the thoughtful manner in which she had extricated him from an embarrassing situation by exposing the intrigues of an unprincipled minion; but surely we are at liberty to interpret the result as an indication that a supernatural agency is interested in bestowing rewards upon suffering innocence. It evidently requires no special penetration to perceive that there is a measure of equity in the transfer to Esther of the wealth of one who promised to enrich the royal treasury in return for the privilege of slaughtering the Jews. Death has overtaken one who, without cause, sought the life of others. So far justice is satisfied. To complete her work, the property of the guilty must be given to the innocent, for Haman had expected to appropriate the possessions of those whom he had marked for destruction.

The custom of confiscating the estates of the disloyal is apparently as securely founded in justice as it is ancient in practice—an assertion by no means true of every custom handed down from antiquity. It is difficult to see how any one can possess an undisturbed right to the possession of property after he has engaged in efforts to overthrow the government under which he claims security. It seems simple justice to say that allegiance is the price which one should be expected to pay for the protection of his interests. Until rights delegated from Heaven have been trampled upon, loyalty is due from the citizen to the state, and in return protection is due from the state to the citizen ; but in the act of disavowing allegiance, the citizen surrenders the claim of protection. Surely, it ought not to be expected that the state would confer favors upon its subjects while they are in rebellion ; and after rebellion is suppressed is there any injustice in appropriating the property of defiant rebels, thereby securing, in part, the means of defraying the expenses which their own conduct has rendered necessary ? We may spend much idle breath in nonsensical commendation of that misdirected leniency which we are pleased to denominate magnanimity. We may discourse eloquently about smothering the dying embers of treason beneath noble exhibitions of charity. We may fondly hope to convert disloyalty into loyalty by the display of unmerited kindness ; but are those citizens necessarily heartless who are so constituted as to imagine that there is no great wisdom in paying a price for rebellion, no great evidence of prudence in encouraging subsequent revolution by proffering advantages if it shall prove successful ? Are such the enemies of humanity and hostile to the interests of the state because they sincerely believe that in its outcome justice may prove as beneficent as indiscrim-

inate compassion? Equity is magnanimous. Is there any reason to conclude that magnanimity shown toward the innocent is any less commendable than magnanimity shown toward the guilty? If, as often happens in the history of a nation, no species of magnanimity, except that involved in simple justice, can be manifested toward all classes of citizens, is it impossible to concede that a Christian statesman may honestly fear that excessive forbearance may be injustice to the state and even cruelty to the loyalty of succeeding generations? Magnanimity, like mercy, is cautious about invading the domain of justice; it might otherwise come to be viewed as weakness—a something to be despised. It is power judiciously administered which arouses patriotic emotions and stimulates the spirit of loyalty. The ability to inspire fear and the determination to reward the loyal and to punish the guilty, are indispensable elements in the maintenance of government. Men are not saints, though some claim perfection. They are governed through their hopes and their fears. Were there no hopes of reward and no fear of punishment, a universe would soon be in rebellion.

Esther may have experienced much satisfaction in becoming the unexpected recipient of great wealth. Did Ahasuerus derive no joy from its bestowment? If, as experience and scriptures alike teach, it is more blessed to give than to receive, then the happiness of the latter was not inferior to that of the former. Giving aids in conquering selfishness, in developing generosity, in cultivating kindly feelings and in rendering one more like him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not. The reception of benefactions, however, tends to destroy independence of character, to benumb the finer sensibilities, to create an embarrassing sense of obligation and to par-

alyze energy by removing incentives to personal exertion. Who then will question the truth of the statement that the giver receives richer blessings than the receiver?

The world admires heroism, by whomsoever it may be exhibited. It is a quality which all are ready to reward, the beggar vying with the king in his efforts to recompense actions which command his admiration and stir his emotions. So universal is this disposition that the worship of heroes has been confined to no period and to no nation. We may be disposed to concede that it is frequently but a perversion of an instinct implanted with the design of having us reverence absolute power as centred in Deity; but we cannot deny that it is a trait in human nature. Power is always admired; weakness, especially moral, is generally contemned. Robust Christianity, such as was exhibited in the Saviour's time, even its enemies cannot refuse to respect. Manliness will command esteem. When religion is despised it can only be because in embodied form it has become emasculated, a mere emotion without heroism, a creed without faith, activity without power, goodness without manliness, piety without common-sense. Should the ministry of the Christian Church ever again become, what it once was in England, an object of contempt, it will be a result of their not possessing those qualities which merit honor. Should the adherents of Christianity ever be so unfortunate as to incur the scorn of the world, impartial history will adjudge them deserving all they receive. Whenever any considerable number are disposed to condemn the church, its friends do well to inquire for the cause; nor will it be difficult to discover, except by such as are under the charm of cowardice. Bitter hostility the church can afford to endure, indeed this may attest her power and be a pledge of future triumph; but the silent

contempt of the intelligent is a barrier which cannot be removed till the cause which produces it ceases to exist.

Nor should we fail to note that Esther secured the triumph of the church, not by augmenting its membership, but by increasing spirituality in her own soul. There is a species of activity which being dis severed from piety is quite certain to end in weakness. It may seem zealous, earnest, tireless ; it may be crowned with success in procuring adherents to embodied Christianity and in enlisting noisy advocates of churchly pretensions, but alas ! being indifferent to the baptism of the Spirit, and too busily engaged in externals to cultivate hidden graces, it produces results that are evanescent in their nature, and too superficial to move the heart of humanity or to wed souls to religious principle. From artesian wells crystal waters flow continually ; from shallow pits only disease-breeding beverages can be taken, and even such only after heaven's showers has filled them with surface drainage. If, therefore, we desire blessings for the Church of God, let us seek to have the shafts of truth pierce to the recesses of the soul, producing an uninterrupted flow from fountains of life—waters that refresh the fainting and inspire hope to the dying. Lord, revive thy church.

Providences have been tending to

THE EXALTATION OF THE LOWLY.

“Mordecai came before the king.” Prior to Haman's overthrow, he dared not present himself before the monarch. An humble servant, oppressed and persecuted, he could hope for royal favors only through the intercession of the queen. Now he may enter the Persian court, honored and trusted, respected and loved. When the

proud are humbled, the lowly may rise. When the oppressor is crushed, the merits of the oppressed may come to be recognized and recompensed. When the wicked are punished, the innocent have an opportunity of being rewarded. When malice has involved itself in ruin, its victim may enter avenues of honor—may be welcomed to positions of responsibility which could never have been his if envy had not directed attention to worth which was deemed sufficiently conspicuous to call for enmity. When irreligion has run its course, overwhelming itself and its adherents in shame, religion may become more firmly established and more generally accepted, because of efforts made for its annihilation.

The advancement of the lowly Mordecai was owing to gratitude on the part of the queen. As there was no occasion for further concealment—Esther having confessed herself a Jewess and Mordecai's loyalty being recognized—gratitude is permitted to acknowledge a relationship which prudence had hitherto concealed. A tie, stronger even than friendship, unites her to him whom Haman desired to execute. Though the exercise of gratitude is a pleasing evidence of nobility, we are compelled to acknowledge that its manifestation is somewhat rare. Forgetfulness of benefits received is quite common; even the remembrance of them, infrequent as it is, is sometimes more effective in inducing a desire for their repetition than in prompting to acts which are a recognition of obligations already due. Though a change in circumstances and the lapse of time are potent instrumentalities in effacing the recollection of past kindness, Esther did not forget her indebtedness to Mordecai. The depth and tenderness of her grateful emotions found expression in language as forcible as it is simple: "She

told what he was to her"—how affectionate and helpful he had been, and still was.

This portion of the narrative, though brief and limited to the recital of two simple facts, is nevertheless capable of yielding spiritual nourishment and practical lessons. May not the believer hope that after he has vanquished his spiritual foes and overcome Satan himself, he may enter the court of the King of kings; where, no longer under the necessity of presenting his plea through the intercession of "the beloved," he may be recognized as a loyal subject and need go out no more—entering upon the rewards of a completed victory? Nor will it be needful for him to enter upon self-vindication. The Lord will announce, "what he and the believer have been to each other," the intimate relationship between them.

As we view Mordecai standing before the king are we not at liberty to affirm that neither the believer nor the church need fear persecution from the hands of God's enemies! Hostility to Christianity is certain, sooner or later, to defeat itself; nay more, it is a powerful agency in spreading the truth and in enhancing the final triumph. What the church has to fear is not persecution, but popularity; not the opposition of the wicked, but their favor; not the embittered activity of her enemies, but that indifference which springs from contempt and is fed on the conviction that the church is too deficient in manliness or too feeble in faith to attempt anything which is likely to incur the odium of the world. The moral abominations of modern society, why does not the church cast them out? Because the feebleness of her faith leaves her a victim to the fear of arousing opposition. Are all Christians under bonds to keep the peace with these forces of evil? No: there are those who, like Mordecai and

Esther, are willing to sacrifice themselves and are ready to cast out devils, and are able ; but the prudent are inviting them to depart out of their coasts, as they invited the Master. The expulsion of demons costs something, as it did the Gadarenes—a herd of swine.

Perhaps one main reason why Christian communities are so reluctant to undertake the task of removing evils, is because of the difficulty of convincing the public that the efforts are directed against wrong, not against wrong-doers ; that society is loved and its welfare sought. Even Mordecai and Esther seem not to have distinguished between Haman and Haman's conduct ; and it is certain that the prime-minister viewed those as his personal enemies who were endeavoring to thwart his purposes.

A further exaltation awaits Mordecai. The king's signet, taken from Haman before his execution, is delivered to the Jew, indicating his appointment to the highest office within the gift of the monarch. Is his preferment the result of chance ? Certainly not. Principle, pluck, push, perseverance, these are the conditions of success. In absolute monarchies, where royal favorites become ministers of state, sudden changes are not unusual, deposition being followed by forfeiture of property, not infrequently by death, and the arbitrary appointment of a successor ; but it was Mordecai's tact and principle which secured for him the office so unexpectedly rendered vacant.

Inducted into office by the will of the monarch, Mordecai is honored by the queen in being set over the house of Haman. Though it may be unbecoming to give away what she has so recently received as a gift from the sovereign, Esther may surrender the present possession of Haman's residence, and the future management of his estate to whom she pleases—certainly may assign them

to the new vizier, the present royal favorite. In reference to one act in this scene, retributive justice has completed her work. Mordecai stands where Haman stood. The latter, having borne the penalty of his guilt, has passed to a higher court, leaving a memory loaded with more odium than he has succeeded in heaping upon the former.

Mordecai rose to eminence from lowly station. In this there may be that which we seek in vain to explain ; but there is greater difficulty in explaining why thousands, quite as worthy, perhaps equally loyal, and even more intelligent, were allowed to end their lives in obscurity, and go down to unmarked graves. We may hope that the enigma is partially solved when we are able to perceive that the training in adversity's school is necessary to exaltation in the future state. Humility here is the avenue to exaltation hereafter. The wilderness must be traversed ere Mount Pisgah is reached. The Jordan must be crossed ere the land of promise can be entered, where worth is the measure of exaltation.

Haman's sun set at noon—set behind clouds of inky blackness. There is another mystery even more profound, the success of many of the unprincipled, and that not for a brief period of life but down to old age. Possibly, however, we may hear retributive justice saying, Let them have their good things now, they shall have anguish soon enough.

Providences are tending to

ESTHER'S SUCCESS IN A PLEA FOR THE JEWS.

Again the queen presents herself before the monarch. She has rescued herself, and secured the promotion of Mordecai ; but her work is incomplete till she has delivered her oppressed people, and freed the struggling

church. In the excess of her joy over the realization of more than she had dared to anticipate, she does not forget her kindred, nor content herself with the empty hope that everything needful for their safety will follow. She undertakes to aid Providence in bringing about beneficent results. Her consecration to the welfare of her people is remarkable, her unselfishness complete. At the first royal interview she may have been influenced, in measure at least, by a desire to preserve her own life ; now her motives are evidently disinterested. She is ready to imperil dignity, influence, affection, wealth, life itself for her countrymen. She voluntarily assumes the office of advocate for those exposed to the consequences of the nefarious decree. With valid grounds upon which to plead for their release—the injustice of the edict, the innocence of the Jews, the injury it would inflict upon the state ; with motives as disinterested as they were potent, prompting to self-sacrifice ; with sympathy in the cause of the Jews, with whose interests her own were so intimately identified, that life would lose its charms if her kindred were destroyed ; with the conviction that it was a duty as well as a privilege to advocate the cause of the oppressed—she fell at the monarch's feet and besought him to “put away the mischief of Haman.” The ardor of her desire does not prevent her, however, from exercising prudence. She does not designate the obnoxious decree as the king's, but characterizes it as the work of Haman.

“Put away the mischief ;” alas ! there are evils which once perpetrated can never be obliterated ; there are wrongs which must be patiently endured, because their removal is impossible, or at least impracticable ; there are forms of wickedness upon which the eye must rest until its light is extinguished in death.

Esther's intercession may be regarded as the earnest plea of a patriotic heart. She is not asking honor for her people. She is not imploring wealth. She desires the revocation of an unjust edict, that so her people may have liberty to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. Why should she covet honors for them? These might lead them along the dizzy heights of worldly greatness only to topple into an abyss of anguish. Why covet riches? Material prosperity might only measure the progress of moral degeneracy. Why covet the privilege of propagating Judaism throughout the Persian empire? The faith of her fathers might thereby be widened, it is true; but extension might easily result in increased weakness. By securing liberty of conscience, those who embraced Abraham's faith might augment its strength; alas! how frequently has injudicious extension of embodied Christianity rendered it corrupt and weak—indeed, rendered it a serious obstacle to the progress of religion, transforming it into an efficient instrumentality of evil, because it assumes to have the sanction of God and the indorsement of the moral sense! Those who reflect deeply upon these subjects will be little disposed to question the truth of the assertion, "*Corruptio optimi est pessima*"—the best when corrupted becomes the worst. Phariseeism, formalism, and Christianity divorced from principle, have perhaps proved greater enemies of God and man than heathenism itself. "By the vicar's skirts the devil climbs into the belfry."

The world judges the church by its deeds, not by its words. Is this improper? Have we no right to judge the venders of counterfeit coins by their acts, not by their honeyed words, nor yet by the valuable apparel in which their concealed villainies have clothed them? "In

true kindness of heart," said Dr. Guthrie, "sweetness of temper, open-handed generosity, the common charities of life, many men of the world lose nothing by comparison with such professors; and how are you to keep the world from saying, 'Ah, your man of religion is no better than others; nay, he is sometimes worse'? With what frightful prominence does this stand out in the never-to-be-forgotten answer of an indian chief to the missionary who urged him to become a Christian. The plumed and painted savage drew himself up in the consciousness of superior rectitude, and with indignation quivering on his lips and flashing in his eye, he replied, 'Christian lie! Christian cheat! Christian steal, drink, murder! Christian has robbed me of my lands and slain my tribe!' adding, as he haughtily turned away, 'The devil, Christian! I will be no Christian.''' Are heathen lands dishonored by crimes which find no parallel in so-called Christian countries? Have the votaries of Buddha been guilty of vices from which those bearing the name of Christ have turned with loathing? Have we defended the honor of religion? Have we guarded the rights of property with greater sacredness? Have we shown more respect for the liberty of individual opinion? Have we adopted more effective measures for the improvement of the dependent classes? The Spaniards converted Mexico by cold lead and sharpened steel. Did they improve the moral and material condition of her people? It is very questionable. "I doubt," says Arthur Helps, "whether there was a single Mexican so ill-lodged as millions of our poor countrymen are." "It is a strange thing to think of," says Dr. Lees, "that Spain was more prosperous under the Moors than she has been under Christian rulers. The government was more liberal, more tolerant, more cultured; her people were better educated, her

lands better cultivated. Since the Moors were driven away, Spain has almost continually retrograded."

Is life less secure in China than in America? In a single county in one of the Middle States, a State boasting of thousands of churches pointing to a just God, one hundred and fifty murders in the last ten years, and three persons hanged! There are some painful facts which look as if our boasted civilization was a partial failure.

We do but little more than raise the corner of the curtain which conceals the spectacle upon which this age refuses to look. Evil, we are aware, cannot be put down by denunciation, however severe it may be. Condemnation, beyond what is necessary to fix the public gaze upon evil, can do little or no good. It may pull down; it cannot build up. It may produce despondency; it cannot inspire hope. It may destroy energy; it cannot produce an unconquerable faith. Genuine, living, working goodness can alone prove efficient in ameliorating the condition of society. Denunciation of false theories and of the methods employed by the advocates of an effete philosophy did not assist Newton in wresting from nature her hitherto hidden truths. In faith, Kepler toiled on through many weary years. The same inspiring principle sustained Faraday. "Not in scepticism but in faith," says Professor Pritchard, "the elder Herschel, hour after hour, walked his weary but observant rounds, till he had finished his mirrors, not doubting they would in due time unfold to him the construction of the material heavens." Not scepticism, to which an unmeasured condemnation of the evils existing under the cloak of Phariseism may possibly lead, but living faith, faith in God, faith in man's better purposes, faith in the blessed results of duty performed, is the agency by which society is to be regenerated. Without this all is selfishness, passion, dis-

couragement, confusion, darkness. Without it human society, it would seem, must continue to grow worse and worse. "To think the worst," said Lord Bolingbroke, "is the sure mark of a mean spirit and a base soul." Destroy trust in God and confidence in the destiny of humanity, and pandemonium would begin on earth. To those who trust God, employ agencies, rely upon goodness and wait in patience, Heaven seldom fails to present pleasing tokens of Divine favor and exhilarating evidence of a coming triumph for every worthy cause.

If we are only able to labor on, retaining the spirit of all-abounding charity, success is certain, even though it may come after our own sun has set behind clouds in the western sky. God lives. Truth cannot perish. Self-sacrifice has its rewards. The better portion of the world loves right. The age is struggling upward. Phariseeism, formalism, and dead Christianity—everything from which life has departed and which in its decay is tending to produce moral miasma—shall find a tomb. Loving, laboring, waiting, we need not fear the result. "Love," says Emerson, "would put a new face on this weary old world, in which we dwell as pagans and enemies; and it would warm the heart to see how fast the vain diplomacy of statesmen, the impotence of armies and navies and lines of defence would be succeeded by that unarmed child. Love will creep where it cannot go; will accomplish that, by imperceptible methods—being its own fulcrum, lever and power—which force could never achieve. Have you not seen in the woods, in a late autumn morning, a poor fungus or mushroom, a plant which without any solidity, nay, that seemeth nothing but a soft mush or jelly, by its constant, bold and inconceivably gentle pushing, manage to break its way up through the frosty ground, and actually to lift a hard

crust on its head? This is the symbol of the power of kindness. The virtue of this principle in human society, in application to great interests, is obsolete and forgotten. Once or twice in history it has been tried, in illustrious instances, with signal success. This great, overgrown, dead Christendom of ours still keeps alive at least the name of a lover of mankind. But one day all men will be lovers, and every calamity will be dissolved in the universal sunshine."

XI.

PERSEVERANCE REWARDED.

“ In peace or war who his great purpose yields
He is the only villain of this world ;
But he who labors firm and gains his point,
He is the son of fortune and of fame ;
By those admired, those specious villains most,
That else had bellowed out reproach against him.”

JAMES THOMSON.

“ To know how to wait is the great secret of success.”

DR. DE MAISTRE.

“ Time and patience change the mulberry-tree to satin.”

EASTERN PROVERB.

“ The path of duty in this world is the road to salvation in the next.”

JEWISH PROVERB.

No one faculty, however brilliant it may be, is a satisfactory guarantee of success. No single quality, however conspicuous, constitutes that nobility which is man's richest estate here and his foundation of happiness hereafter. No acquisition, whether of wealth or of learning, suffices to command spontaneous and permanent homage. Neither excellence of genius, nor intellectual culture, nor warmth of affection, will secure confidence, a happy home and a good prospect of heaven. Character, which is the most potent agency in the world—more powerful than genius or culture—is the happy blending of many qualities into a symmetrical whole. Nor are honesty, truthfulness, industry and application, though plain

qualities, less essential than the more brilliant. It was admirable advice which Burns received from his father :

“ He bade me act a manly part,
Though I had ne’er a farthing ;
For without an honest, manly heart
No man was worth regarding.”

Though no one quality of character should be pressed into jutting prominence, there can be little question that perseverance will bear conspicuousness as well as any. Its possession is a better inheritance than genius ; indeed, is there any loftier genius than ability to continue working? Buffon said, “ Genius is patience.” Newton effected his extraordinary discoveries “ by always thinking unto them.” Kepler, the eminent philosopher, said, “ With me diligent thought was the occasion of still further thinking, until at last I brooded with the whole energy of my mind upon the subject.” Dalton, the illustrious chemist, attributed his success to application, not to genius. The untiring perseverance of mediocre abilities has accomplished more than brilliant endowments. These, being often unaccompanied by application, are outstripped by plodding diligence and persevering dulness. It was by discipline that Sir Robert Peel became an ornament to the British Senate. Whatever his intellectual powers may have been, it is certain his diligence was extraordinary. Lord Brougham was a man of prodigious faculty for work. His labors extended over a period of sixty years, producing for him distinction in law, in science, in literature, in politics. Napoleon labored twenty hours out of twenty-four, not infrequently tiring out four secretaries in one day. Ney was surnamed “ the indefatigable.” Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, the novelist, poet, dramatist, historian, essayist, orator

and statesman, disdained ease, working as though his success depended exclusively upon his own exertions. Mr. Disraeli's first appearance as an author was a pitiable failure. By perseverance he succeeded. As an orator his first speech in the House of Commons was greeted with ridicule. He concluded his address with a prophecy, uttered amid "loud laughter": "I have begun many things several times and have succeeded at last. I will sit down now, but the time will come when you will hear me." The prediction was fulfilled. He lived to deliver orations which commanded the attention, not only of England, but of the world.

Perhaps the main reason why perseverance is so essential to success is because progress in any department of life is slow. Advance is step by step. Grand results are seldom reached at once. Life is a struggle. There are many forces in society; only the persistent become controlling. To overcome the jealousy that is ever pursuing the successful, one needs to be recognized as paying a higher price for success than others—harder work longer continued.

To toil on amid discouragements which have overcome others requires patience, faith and an elasticity of character which only good temper can impart. Cheerful continuance in effort is a rare quality. Perseverance, which though it has failed ninety-nine times, essays the hundredth time—like that of the spider which keeps on trying till it has succeeded in throwing a web across the angle of the room—is a valuable endowment, one which seldom grows except in the soil of cheerfulness. Work perseveringly continued, with kindness beaming from the features, is certain to secure rewards. This, man honors and God blesses.

Perseverance in pursuing the path of duty we might

expect would be crowned with success. Man was not made for glory or honor, for ease or power. He was created to perform duty, leaving the consequences with Him who never fails in rewarding honest exertion. Sinking self in the spirit of consecration, he pursues the path of rectitude without regard to fame, finding his reward in the consciousness of duty done. Like Esther, he may pass away without leaving a monument to mark his tomb, even without hearing the "well done" of those who have been benefited by his toils, but of the serenity of his mind no one can rob him.

Of its greatest heroes the world seldom hears. The opportunities for the display of heroism in the ordinary duties of life have been improved so frequently that the statement of Mr. Binney is strictly true : " The noblest biographies have not always been written. There have been great heroic men who have toiled on in their daily duties, and suffered and sacrificed, and kept their integrity ; who served God and helped their connections and got on themselves ; who have displayed, in all this, qualities of mind, courage, goodness that would have honored a bishop, a general or a judge."*

Of the poor it may be said, " as a class they are honest, kind, sympathetic, liberal." How many noble deeds there are which are never blazoned to the world ! How many self-sacrificing lives without a biographer ! How many daughters wearing away their lives and enshrouding their future in gloom, by attendance at the bedside of enfeebled parents ! How many sons who are toiling beyond their strength, and meeting the responsibilities

* To this class belonged Edward Flower, who, dwelling in a free State along the borders of slavery, risked everything—fortune, reputation, ease, life itself, to aid poor slaves in escaping from bondage.

of life with cheerfulness, that they may cast a ray of sunshine into the heart of a saddened mother, or cheer the declining years of an aged father ! Noble sacrifices ! Commendable heroism ! Verily, they have their reward !

It is exceedingly fortunate that such can find their reward in duty done. Alas ! the ungrateful world too often neglects them.*

1. Esther's perseverance was of no ordinary quality ; her heroism was such as seldom fails to secure success. She set out to rescue her people. Till she has succeeded nothing can dishearten her. Though several efforts have failed, she hopes deliverance may come as the reward of subsequent exertions. Though the edict is still in force, she has succeeded in securing the royal recognition of existing evils. In an age of cruelty she has induced a tyrant to concede that injustice exists, which, though indorsed by many, nevertheless calls for immediate removal. In every reform the most difficult step is the first, to convince others that evils exist calling for remedy. The benevolent spirit of John Howard was

* Of this we have an illustration in the case of Helen Petrie. When no persons could be found, not even in a company of hardy sailors, who would risk life to rescue two fishermen wrecked on the island of Unst, she was willing to brave death, and succeeded after great exertion in delivering them—dragging one from the water by his hair. She subsequently earned her bread in obscurity as a domestic servant, unknown to the world and even unrequited by those whom she had rescued from death. It was not till her noble heart had ceased to beat that her heroic act was announced to the world. In heroism, her conduct equalled that of many who have waded to fame in the warm blood of thousands, acquiring prominence through the loyalty of those who were ready to die unhonored and unknown, humbly treading the path of duty.

stirred by the cruelties to which the helpless inmates of European prisons were subjected.* To secure reform he kept incessantly dragging the facts to light. He had undertaken to befriend the friendless. The first condition of securing legislation in their favor was to convince the English people that the existing prison regulations were cruel, immoral, disgraceful. By per-

*He had experienced them himself. The packet in which he had taken voyage to Portugal having been captured by a French privateer, he was left without food or water for forty-eight hours. On landing at Brest he was imprisoned, being cast into a dungeon along with felons of every grade. When they were nearly famished a leg of mutton was thrown into the loathsome place. The half-starved captives tore it to pieces, gnawing it like ravenous beasts. At night they were forced to remain in the pestilential dungeon with no bed except damp straw infested with vermin. Securing liberty at last, Howard returned to England. He immediately entered upon his life-mission—an effort to reveal to Europe the condition of her prisons. He travelled from one country to another, visiting prisons and penitentiaries. He published the results of his investigations. He was resolved that the benevolent should know the cruelties practised upon the inmates of dungeons in Christian states. He announced that prisoners were neither separated nor classified, the comparatively innocent herding with the abominably guilty. The person who stole a few vegetables to preserve his family from starvation was forced to become the companion of hardened criminals. The man who was imprisoned for debt must associate with the forger; the dishonest girl with the abandoned; the unfortunate with the vicious. Those who were as yet untried, and even those who had been pronounced “Not Guilty,” were left to imbibe lessons of crime from murderers and professional thieves. The acquitted were dragged back to these hideous associations until they should pay certain fees to the jailer—fees which some were unable to pay and others looked upon as extortion, though they generally paid them, in the end, to secure liberty, being in no condition to defend their rights from lawless imposition.

severance he succeeded. Laws were enacted which mitigated the evils.

The abolition of the slave-trade is another illustration of the fact that the most difficult step in reform is to convince the public that wrong exists. To effect this, in reference to the kidnapping of negroes for transportation to foreign ports—whither they were conveyed in crowded ships, filth, disease and death raging beneath the hatchways, while arrogance and heartlessness trod the upper deck—Wilberforce exerted his energies for many years. It was, in fact, his life-work.

We are familiar with the fact that the pioneers in the anti-slavery movement did their most arduous and most effective work in convincing the world that it was cruel to treat human beings as brutes.

Of the same principle we find an illustration in the efforts put forth in recent years to prevent cruelty to animals.*

In like manner it required centuries to convince Christian people of the injustice manifest in persecuting for opinion's sake. "It is a shame," said Clovis, looking over the rich fields across the Garonne, "that such territory should belong to villains who have a different faith from ours. Onward, let us take possession of their lands." How many "holy crusades" have found their origin in pure selfishness! The injustice of putting people to death because they do not think as we think has at last come to be recognized; but has illiberality entirely disappeared? By no means. The rack, the thumb-

* Edward Flower strove for years to produce the conviction among the aristocracy of London that the gag-rein upon horses was a needless cruelty. He succeeded to some extent, but it was only after long-continued and persevering exertions. He had to sow the streets of the city with printed arguments.

screw, the frying-pan and the stake are no longer employed as an agency in securing uniformity of opinion ; but have no other agencies usurped their place ? Let those reply who have endured everything short of death because they have presumed to do their own thinking, not choosing to accept their opinions second-hand. Is there no disposition to ostracize those who hold opinions at variance with the sentiments of the majority ? no readiness to fellowship with some who neither love mercy, walk humbly, nor deal honestly ? Is there more certainty on theological questions and metaphysical problems than in reference to the obligations of truthfulness and honesty ? Is it easier to determine the duration of penalties for sin than to ascertain whether purity is essential to integrity of Christian character ? Is it possible to resolve the mysteries of the hypostatic union, but impossible to decide whether intemperance is inconsistent with godliness ? possible to ascertain that charity does not prevent us from ridiculing the person who exercises individuality in the matter of dress, but impossible to admit that charity may fear there are wolves in sheep's clothing ? Deposition from the ministry for opinion's sake ; immorality in the communion unrebuked ! " These things ought ye to have done and not to have left the other undone."

Less than a century ago it was the custom to practise vivisection upon prisoners, the living body being taken apart muscle by muscle, nerve by nerve, tendon by tendon, bone by bone. It was pronounced indispensable to a proper knowledge of the human frame. Medical science demanded it, it was affirmed. To abolish this cruelty required much argument. Now it is conceded the practice was cruel. Animals are substituted. (It will probably take a lifetime to convince savans that

there is cruelty in hacking up living animals. They have no newspapers, never deposit a ballot—are only dogs, frogs, lizards, toads and monkeys.)

It thus becomes evident that the first and most difficult step in reform is to convince the public of the existence of an evil. We are all prone to think that what is, is what shall be. We resolve that the existing order of things shall continue. We will not surrender it till its last prop is swept away. When that is done the reform is effected ; we inaugurate a new condition of things, and take glory to ourselves for eradicating an evil. We have done something grand—in our own opinion ; though we have done nothing but oppose the reform till we could oppose it no longer ; nothing but persecute those who toiled till they succeeded in convincing us that we had been unjust, unkind, cruel ; nothing except appropriate honors which were due to others.

Of this propensity of human nature we possess conspicuous examples.*

* During the earlier centuries of the Christian era amphitheatres were built in all the large cities of the Roman Empire. In these, captives taken in war and trained gladiators fought with each other and with wild beasts for the amusement of the populace. (The renowned Colosseum at Rome was designed by a Christian architect.) On the days of the games, men, women, and children assembled by thousands. Magistrates, nobles, priests, senators, every class was present. Human beings were to struggle and to die to furnish Rome a holiday. One man thought this cruel ; but being without influence his voice was silenced. He could die, however, for his convictions ; and if his life would stay the carnage he was ready to surrender it. He enters the Colosseum with the surging multitude. The gladiators step into the arena and pausing a moment, look full into each other's face. The sand upon which they tread must drink the life-blood of one. A shout announces the eagerness of the multitude for the coming combat. Suddenly, forth from the crowd steps the hermit, for

2. Esther succeeded in securing a practical surrender of the claim of infallibility.

The claim to inerrancy, strange to say, is by no means rare, especially in reference to the performance of official duties. The Vatican Council decreed, July 18th, 1870, that "when the Roman Pontiff speaks *ex cathedra* he possesses infallibility." The *Freeman's Journal*, of New York, in commenting upon the decision, affirmed, "The Pope is infallible personally." Pio Nino, in his speech to the Vicars Apostolic (March 23d, 1870) said, "I cannot but speak the truth."

At L'hassa, as well as at Rome, dwells one whom the faithful pronounce incapable of error when speaking in his ecclesiastical capacity.

The frequency with which this claim has been set up is a striking evidence of the arrogance of which human nature is capable. Even Protestant denominations have been known to claim that the church in its

such he was. Leaping over the wall which encloses the arena, and throwing himself between the combatants, he shouts, "Shed no innocent blood; God has said, 'Thou shalt not kill.'" The howling, maddened audience vociferate, "Back, old man." He will not move. Pushing him aside, the gladiators advance to the contest. Again he throws himself between them, exclaiming, "Do no harm." The crowd shout, "Cut him down." To this the judge assents. Running him through with a sword, they fight over his dead body—fight and die.

The hermit's sacrifice was not in vain. The truth for which he died sank deep into men's hearts. Two years later the gladiatorial combats were abolished, never to be again revived. Honorius claimed the honor of remanding this relic of barbarism into oblivion. The man who awakened the Roman people, and convinced them of their cruelty, what of him? His very name is unknown. His heroism received such empty reward as commonly falls to the lot of the world's greatest heroes—man's abuse till death, then applause.

organic capacity cannot err. Ecclesiastical bodies infallible ! A mass-meeting a representative of inerrancy ! Majorities are as likely to err as individuals—perhaps more likely, for there is no conscience. Most probably they are oftener wrong than right. Certainly, entire communions have drifted into error, unless we are at liberty to conclude that contradictory doctrines are alike true. Behold then the folly of persecution for opinion's sake. Sectarianism is only an aggravated form of selfishness.

It would certainly seem that in Ahasuerus' case at least the right to enact implied the right to repeal. Since no human wisdom can foresee the consequences of a legal enactment, nor perceive that altered circumstances may not render its reversal necessary, it seems strange that the Persian monarchs should have boasted that their laws were irreversible. The disposition to believe one's self right, and every one else wrong, is quite too common—the claim of inerrancy, not in theory, but in practice. It follows that the reformer must be like Esther in one respect at least—he must have strong convictions. Unless he is able to exclaim, "Thus saith the Lord," he will not be likely to change the opinions of his age. By no other agency is he fitted to overturn the beliefs of those who believe themselves correct in accepting prevalent opinions without reflection. What is sadder than the struggle which the reformer must carry on in his own heart against the torturing apprehension that possibly he is wrong and his antagonists right ! Reformers, as a rule, are warm-hearted people, who suffer anguish in being constrained to differ from their fellow-men. Consequently, their faith in God, in themselves, and in the better purposes of humanity, needs to be strong.

Surrendering the claim of inerrancy while asserting,

“The writing which is written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s ring may no man reverse”—how true to human nature! A person has determined to adopt a new course of conduct; with labored effort he attempts to convince you that his present course is consistent with his past life. He retreats from an untenable position, but he will not do it in the presence of the enemy. He claims that he is still behind the breastwork of consistency; and though he has turned round, it is safest not to intimate as much. An acquaintance, it may be, has wronged you; while preparing to do you justice in act, he is defending his past treatment of you. It is his awkward method of retreat. Accept his returning kindness. A friend has been running a course of vice. You have administered pointed reproof. He has resolved on reformation. Be not surprised if you find him entertaining unkind feelings toward you—occasionally seeking to impair the estimation in which you are held. He is covering his retreat.

The wording as well as the promulgation of the new edict was intrusted to Mordecai, not to Esther. Perhaps it was because this duty involved upon the prime-minister, or for the purpose of relieving the queen of anxiety. It is at least certain that it was easier for the king to surrender after the urging had ceased and to another rather than to the queen. The person who is about to make reparation to an injured acquaintance not infrequently hunts around for “a mutual friend” to whom he may communicate his altered purposes. There is no small amount of pride in human nature. From this, when wounded, it is as difficult to secure a reversal of a previous decision as it is to extort a concession from hardened obduracy. When a person desires to retreat,

it is the part of kindness to make the way as easy as possible.

Though the irreversibility of a royal decree was a fundamental article of the Persian constitution, the king has devised an expedient to do even more than to counteract its effect. He has authorized the Jews to oppose force by force. They may do more than defend themselves when assailed. They may assault their enemies. They may make ample preparations for the inevitable conflict.

Behold the frailty of human law. It cannot bind even those whom consistency impels to regard its provisions with becoming respect. Evasion is frequently resorted to ; indeed, it seems scarcely possible to construct a law which intelligent wickedness cannot discover some means of evading. Some of the most beneficent legislation of this century has been the repeal of existing laws. There are reasoners, prominently Mr. Herbert Spencer, who think that the greatest evil of the age is over-legislation. A careful examination of his trenchant arguments is likely to produce in the mind many misgivings as to the wisdom of much that is done by the law-making powers of civilized nations. Unless much of his reasoning is fallacious, we could afford to pay legislators to spend most of their time at home. It would be a better investment than to remunerate them for cumbering the statute-books with conflicting enactments ; enactments which render it somewhat difficult for honesty to escape the charge of violating law. Justice would be less encumbered by technicalities under which right is too often smothered. There can be no doubt that excessive legislation facilitates the escape of criminals.

How difficult to repair the disastrous effects of folly ! Ahasuerus may issue a new edict, but he cannot ob-

literate the consequences of the old. He cannot reverse the law. He may encourage the Jews to offer resistance, inaugurating civil war, but to undo the effects of his previous rashness is impossible. What a legacy of irreparable evil is left by wicked men! What an amount of unavoidable mischief has flowed from the writings of Voltaire and of Paine! Their words still live; in fact reproduce themselves in an endless round. Thus always; sinful deeds do not soon die. Error, once promulgated, is slow to perish—though certain to perish. A wrong once done goes on echoing downward along the centuries, outward through the universe, upward till it dashes against the foundations of immovable rectitude. A sinful act once performed is a fact, one which shall have a resurrection in the teeming future, perhaps fifty years hence, perhaps after the rivulet of time has emptied into the ocean of eternity. “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment.” “There is no action of man in this life,” says Thomas of Malmesbury, “which is not the beginning of so long a chain of consequences as that no human providence is high enough to give us a prospect to the end.” “Every atom,” says Babbage, “impressed with good or evil, retains at once the motions which philosophers and sages have imparted to it, mixed and combined in ten thousand ways with all that is worthless and base. The air itself is one vast library, on whose pages are written forever all that man has ever written, or said, or whispered, or done.”

Every word we speak, every purpose we form, every act we execute, must continue to have influence upon the destiny of man. What a train of consequences, extending through generations, have flowed from the acts of Alexander the Great, from the life of Napoleon I.,

from that of Laud and of Henry VIII.! Happy indeed are those who on the bed of death can say, "I have left no unkind word to rankle in the bosom of a friend ; no cruel act to go on perpetuating evil results ; no embodied illustration of wickedness to bewitch the imaginations of those who covet encouragement in sinful courses." In the hour when goodness alone shall have majesty, when character shall be the only passport to a joyous state, may we be able confidently to hope that some little good has come from our lives ; that some despondency has been relieved, some home cheered, some evil checked, some friend blessed.

"My name and my place and my tomb all forgotten,
The brief race of life well and patiently run,
So let me pass away, peacefully, silently,
Only remembered by what I have done."*

* Mary Anne Clough, of Glasgow, a poor factory girl, saw many poor boys around her with no one to care for them, with no one to instruct and direct them. "I will try," she said, "if I can win them to God and to doing what is good." Securing the use of a room below the factory, she opened one of the first Sunday-schools ever started. She visited the homes of the poor boys. She gradually acquired influence over them. So completely did she transform their moral character that if any boy around the factory was more industrious, more truthful, more honest, more accommodating than his companions he was invariably denominated "Mary Anne's boy." Her name has found a prominent place among the benefactors of humanity. She is perhaps as much entitled to the honor of originating the Sunday-school as Robert Raikes or his predecessor Charles Borromeo, and is certainly deserving of more credit for the laudable results attained, since she was a mill-hand, while Raikes was the editor of a newspaper, and Borromeo was a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. Her efforts unquestionably sprang from love of the neglected. Her work was done in an humble way, without any desire for fame.

May we be able to exclaim with the illustrious Sir Walter Scott, "I am now drawing near to the close of my career. It is a comfort for me to think that I have tried to unsettle no man's faith, to corrupt no man's principles."

Verily, there is such a thing as the eternity of goodness. Acts of kindness, deeds of love, self-denials, live after us. No matter how humble our position, the world will not permit our self-sacrifice to perish. An article so precious it cannot afford to consign to oblivion. If we have been laboring for God and humanity, another will take up the work that drops from our palsied hands.

"I need not be missed if another succeed me,
To reap down those fields which in spring I have sown ;
He who ploughed and he who sowed is not missed by the reaper,
He is only remembered by what he has done."

Theirs was grandly done, even unselfishly ; hers was done without the concomitants of wealth, of education or of influence. Dr. Guthrie has well said, "It makes one sad to think how many Christians, with tenfold more time, more money, more education, more influence, have not done a tithe of the good this girl did. If any might have justly pleaded the excuse, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' it was one who found it hard to keep herself, who started each morning to the sound of the factory bell, and hurrying along dark and silent streets, had gone through hours of work ere half the world was awake. . . . And many a night she went forth on her missions of mercy, to seek the lost and raise the fallen, and close with her gentle hands the wounds of humanity."

Compelled by failing health to discontinue her labors, she resigned them to other hands. What a harvest from the seed she had sown ! In a few years the "Glasgow Boys' Religious Society" had 14,000 names on its roll, superintended by 1500 teachers. Addresses were delivered to the neglected youth. Temperance was advocated. Savings banks were organized. In short, every-

It may be we are actuated by the desire to imitate Esther's heroic example. Opportunities are abundant. The poor we have always with us. The friendless are all around us. There are vices upon which our pained eyes are resting almost daily. Afflicted ones are craving sympathy. The despondent ones need cheering. Those who are sincerely striving to help themselves deserve assistance, counsel, loving interest in their behalf, and the encouragement which we have it in our power to impart. Are there no opportunities for heroism? While intemperance continues to slay its thousands yearly; while profanity and vulgarity are wafted on nearly every passing breeze; while lawlessness stalks through the land, endangering the security of property and of life; while waves of impurity are threatening to invade homes of innocency; while political corruption is fattening

thing was done to withdraw the young from evil associations, from filth and ignorance and vice.

Another illustration: Grace Darling, by dint of heroic perseverance, rescued the nine survivors of the wrecked steamer *Forfarshire*. Three years later she quietly, peacefully passes away. Her act lives, and will live as long as there are hearts to appreciate self-sacrifice. She died as she lived, unknown, an inmate of the Longstone Light-house; but her exertions in behalf of those whose piteous cries for help pierced her tender heart have rendered the history of her life sacred to every lover of humanity.

"Little Sandie," the Edinburgh vender of matches, may, from the bundle of straw on which he lies dying, despatch his little brother to carry fourpence to a gentleman whom he owes; and may die whispering, "My little Ruby, what will become of him when I am gone?" but his act of honesty, his dying devotion to principle, and his tender interest in the poor brother, whom he leaves as a waif upon the currents of society, are certain to preserve his name from the fate that overtakes the many who live for self and die unhonored and unblessed.

upon the hard earnings of honest industry, there will be abundant opportunity for the display of every manly virtue—for courage, for perseverance, for heroism, for self-sacrificing devotion to the enduring interests of humanity. May we each heed the scriptural injunction, “Arise and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.”

“Work as if thou hadst to live for aye ;
Worship as if thou hadst to die to-day.”

TUSCAN PROVERB.

“When a good man dies,
For years beyond his ken
The light he leaves behind him lives
Upon the paths of men.”

LONGFELLOW.

“To live in hearts we leave behind
Is not to die.”

Even in life, is there any greater satisfaction than that which comes from duty done ? Is there any honor equal to that which results from self-denial exercised in behalf of our fellow-men ? Is there any peace superior to that which becomes the possession of him of whom the Saviour shall testify, “He hath done what he could” ?

“It’s no in titles nor in rank ;
It’s no in wealth like London bank,
To purchase peace or rest :
It’s no in making muckle mair ;
It’s no in books ; it’s no in lear,
To make us truly blest :
If happiness hae not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise or rich or great,
But never can be blest.”

As a step to heroic living let us learn to admire heroism in others. “Tell me whom you admire,” said Sainte

Beuve, "and I will tell you what you are, at least as regards your talents, tastes and character." Dr. Smiles has well said, "Do you admire mean men? your own nature is mean. Do you admire rich men? you are of the earth, earthy Do you admire honest, brave, manly men? you are yourself of an honest, brave, manly spirit." "No quality," said Dr. Johnson, "will get a man more friends than a sincere admiration of the qualities of others. It indicates generosity of nature, frankness, cordiality and cheerful recognition of merit."

Inability to admire heartily is an indication of an ungenerous disposition, and may be justly considered as an impediment to the acquisition of high qualities; while, on the other hand, he who sincerely reverences greatness is thereby aided in acquiring true greatness. Indeed, is it not strictly true that the power of religion to elevate man is largely attributable to its requiring reverence? In this respect, as in every other, religion is the most efficient instrumentality in ennobling and elevating humanity.

"Religion's all. Descending from the skies
To wretched man, the goddess in her left
Holds out this world, and in her right the next.
Religion, the sole voucher man is man;
Supporter sole of man above himself;
Even in this night of frailty, change and death,
She gives the soul a soul that acts a god."

EDWARD YOUNG.

Alas!

"Earth's joys are but a dream; its destiny
Is but decay and death. Its fairest form
Sunshine and shadow mixed. Its brightest day
A rainbow braided on the wreaths of storms."

XII.

THE BENEFICENT EFFECTS OF PERSECUTION.

“ 'Tis a very good world we live in,
To lend, or to spend, or to give in ;
But to beg or to borrow, or to get your own,
'Tis the very worst world that ever was known.”

“ Sacrifices borne for others are always sacred.”

“ A good man is no worse because dogs are barking after him.”

PERSECUTION is what the church does not covet, perhaps should not ; and yet its effects are often so beneficent that there may be some little doubt whether we are not at liberty to pray, occasionally at least, “ Lord, send persecution to preserve thy church from becoming an object of contempt, if not indeed an unburied carcass breeding moral contagion.” The cause of religion may suffer that which is worse than persecution ; it may be treated with indifference ; its labors may be looked upon as adroit efforts to clothe worldliness in the livery of Heaven. As a rule, friendship is certainly better than enmity ; but when the former cannot be secured without the sacrifice of principle, the latter is preferable. What is true of the upright man is also true of the church—enmity is the next best thing to friendship. This will rivet attention upon the principles for which she is contending and will herald the truth more widely—enmity being the best advertisement available.

If the Papal Church had possessed sufficient policy to have smothered Luther in kindness, she might perhaps have retained power in Europe for another century. Had she possessed self-control adequate to have treated Galileo with indifference his theory of the earth's rotation might have passed almost without notice in his day. The enemies of John Knox did more in proclaiming the doctrine of Christ's sovereignty in the church than he did, though he did much. Washington's calumniators helped in making him great, and in handing down the evidences of his nobility. Lincoln, much as he owed to his admirers, owed almost as much to his traducers. The Jews, in Esther's time, were under obligations to their enemies, who preached Judaism where its missionaries could secure no audience.

1. Persecution of the truth awakens its friends to defend it.

2. Persecution is succeeded by light and gladness, joy and honor.

3. Persecution converts enemies into friends.

Confucius, the "teacher of ten thousand ages," as his disciples called him, taught that conduct is three fourths of life. "Ponder righteousness," said he, "and practise virtue. Knowledge, magnanimity and energy are universally binding. Gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness and kindness constitute perfect virtue." These virtues are never more conspicuous, nor more warmly commended than when their possessors are the objects of bitter persecution. Socrates deemed himself commissioned of Heaven to arouse the moral sense of men; in undertaking to perform the arduous duty he incurred, as might be expected, relentless persecution. This, though it culminated in a violent death, decreed against him by the state, has proved as futile in injuring

his reputation as it has in limiting the reception of his teachings, or in weakening his arguments for the being of God and the immortality of the soul ; indeed, it has done more to herald these than his own zeal could have effected, had he been left undisturbed down to old age to reason with sages in the academy and to converse with common people in the market-place.

Plato, the illustrious pupil of Socrates, who assumed four cardinal virtues as the basis of his moral philosophy—prudence and wisdom, courage and constancy, temperance and discretion, justice and righteousness—and who exhorted, “ Let all men, whether they are successful or not, do their duty and rest satisfied,” would most probably have exerted far less influence in the world than he has, if he had not been subjected to persecution, if he had not been sold into slavery by the tyrant Dionysius, because he dared to advocate liberty, and to disseminate moral precepts antagonistic to the spirit of the age in which he lived. The hostility he endured heralded his teachings more successfully than ten thousand copies of his “ Dialogues ” could have done.

It is acts that have power in the world, not words ; sterling character, not sentimental emotion ; this, however, from the mere fact that it is comparatively rare and consequently quite generally misunderstood, becomes a target for the arrows of malice—of malice which usually defeats itself, ultimately heaping honors on him whom it hoped to crush. Each person, however humble he may be, is capable of securing nobility of character—the grandest thing on earth ; and its possession is likely to render him, in less or greater measure, the object of the sneers, if not of the bitter hostility, of the large number who are disqualified for taking lofty views of life. He will probably discover, however, ere old age overtakes

him, that this hostility is an efficient instrumentality in distilling blessings on his own soul and in heralding lessons to the world. Since character is made up of self-denying devotion to duty—a thing which the world can scarcely ever understand—it is as well adapted to prove beneficent in its ultimate effects as it is fitted to arouse present hatred. Every person measures others by his own standard—others' wheat in his own chaff-basket ; consequently, that which has more weight than he is accustomed to measure is condemned and rejected.

Had there been no opposition to Judaism, Mordecai might not have become its conspicuous defender ; nor would Esther have hazarded her life to procure deliverance for a struggling church. The Jews might have retained a species of faith—faith in a system which had moral and spiritual life once ; they might have discussed its tenets and accepted them as true without being greatly benefited thereby ; inactive religion, though it may embody much truth, soon becomes powerless. Thought widens, and weakens ; action narrows, and strengthens. Philosophers may weigh probabilities and strengthen themselves in indecision as well as in truth ; earnest men, by acting, move society, and being stirred in conscience throw light upon questions otherwise perplexing, almost inexplicable. The secrets of life, so far as they are revealed to man, are revealed to those who sincerely endeavor to give visibility to the living thoughts that burn within. This effort, however, is quite certain to arouse opposition, causing the coward to run, the talker to indulge more freely in pleasing platitudes, and the brave man to gird himself for conflict.

Alas ! with many, especially when formalism is rife, religion is a mere matter of words. In times of persecution, however, forth from this number step those who

have embraced it with the heart, and are ready to defend it, if necessary, to die for it. Its true friends then come to the front. Those who have embraced it merely as a means to the procurement of worldly advancement slink away. As they hold everything—conscience, honor, self-respect, dignity, opinion, and even piety—for sale to the highest bidder, they sever their connection with the church as soon as the world proffers superior advantages. The loss is not great, since they are only a weight to the cause which they have not the manliness to defend, nor the frankness to disavow ; without them the friends of the truth, those who are such from principle, become more active, more harmonious, more aggressive.

Whether the church of the present day needs persecution, as a means of separating the chaff from the wheat and of intensifying the purposes of its true friends, we need not pause to inquire ; but there can be little question that a large number, who are manifesting the spirit of self-sacrifice, would be ready to surrender everything in maintaining the honor of religion and in transmitting its doctrines unimpaired to succeeding generations. The spirit of the martyrs, which is the spirit of the Master, still lives, though worldliness reigns in her own sphere.

“ The roots of fairest bloom lie sometimes hidden
 The deepest beneath the soil ; the stones
 Of purest crystal are from gloomiest mines :
 The tenderest pearls are won from roughest seas :
 And colors dipped in Iris vats
 Beam from unfathomable distances.
 And when night hangs darkest over the struggling church,
 When faith is weary with waiting,
 Then Christ’s feeblest brave their fiercest ;
 Then are vessels fashioned for the Master’s use
 Of unexampled beauty and of price above all price.”

“ Flung to the heedless winds or on the waters cast,
The martyr’s ashes, watered, shall gathered be at last ;
And from the scattered dust around us and abroad
Shall spring a plenteous seed of witnesses for God.”

Persecution did more to procure success for Protestantism than the most stirring sermon ever delivered in her sanctuaries. The former, an act, led to action, and history proves that the church perfects herself more by work than by the discussion of theological questions ; more by life than by enunciation of beautiful maxims ; more by forming character than by formulating truth, though this is important. Since Heaven helps those who help themselves, it is reasonable to suppose that it reveals truth to those who are earnestly striving to bless humanity. The disposition to live upon the faith of buried generations, and to substitute this for interest in living issues, is an evil of such magnitude that whatever prevents its growth, even persecution, is by no means an unmixed calamity. If by such agencies those are banded together who are unselfishly toiling for the progress of practical godliness, the outcome can scarcely be otherwise than beneficent. The system of faith announced by our Master is not so narrow as to limit its salutary effects to the age in which he lived and the country he inhabited. Its comprehensive principles were no doubt designed to be adapted by its adherents to all countries and to every clime. Is any agency better fitted to produce this result than the persecution which compels Christians to unite in defending Heaven’s method of conferring blessings upon humanity, and necessitates the presentation of those phases of Christianity that are intimately connected with the living thought of each successive age—with its loftiest aspirations and its most potent moral forces ?

Next to the benefit conferred upon the world by the

church, is the benefit conferred upon the church by the world. It jostles her so fiercely as to disturb slumbers that might otherwise deepen into moral death. The hostility experienced by the apostles to the religion of Jesus not only induced them to sink all minor differences, and to unite their influence, but prompted them to employ those unanswerable arguments by which they successfully proved the superiority of Christianity to every other system of religious faith. In each succeeding century the power of religion, and its purity as well, has been in measure proportioned to the opposition with which it had to contend. Its friends have ever been most at variance with each other, and have wandered farthest from the truth, when the fires of persecution were extinguished—being then left to imbibe error and to indulge in practices which were as repugnant to reason as they were contrary to scriptural teaching. Except by assuming that persecution has a mission, how shall we account for the fact that the Papal Church could successfully promulgate the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation? How explain the prevalence, in her communion, of a belief so unreasonable as that of priestly absolution? An erring mortal forgive the sins incurred by the violation of a divine law! During the Dark Ages the church stood greatly in need of able antagonists—some form of opposition that would have united the friends of scriptural Christianity. This might have preserved it from becoming freighted with folly, obscured by error, disgraced by vices that were committed under the sanction of religion.

2. Persecution is succeeded by light and gladness, joy and honor.

Not all can escape the hostility of the world. Of active Christians, perhaps but few can; yet all can enjoy

the comforting sense of the Divine favor. "Not all can live on the piazza," as the Tuscan proverb says, "but all can feel the sun." There may be shadows in our lives, but there will be sunshine also. There may be anguish, gladness will succeed. There may be sorrow, joy will be certain to chant its song in the soul. Humiliation may come, honor will not fail to efface its corroding memories. "Trust thyself most" is better advice than "Trust everybody;" and is quite as likely, as in Esther's case, to secure permanent advantages, not alone for self, but as well for those in whose behalf it has self-denyingly labored.

"Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of white and blue, and with a great crown of gold and with a garment of fine linen and purple." The righteous are frequently exalted. Even in this world, the proud are often abased and the lowly lifted to honor. "The Lord bringeth low and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust; and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes and to make them inherit the throne of glory." Of this, Mordecai in Shushan, Luther in Germany, Knox in Scotland, Washington, Lincoln and Garfield in America, are conspicuous examples. Indeed, history seems to present unmistakable evidence that there is a divine law, according to which exalted station is quite as often occupied by those born in poverty as by those dandled in the lap of affluence, perhaps oftener. Self-culture, good judgment, self-denying service and exalted moral character, not only qualify one for any position, however responsible, but not infrequently secure the prize for which ambitious incompetency strives in vain. It cannot be denied, however, that the noble, the heroic, the moral, the religious, are often forced to pass their lives in

obscurity, and to drink the cup of affliction ; and yet it is safe to affirm that few who do their duty become permanently discontented with life. Though they may have eaten the bread of bitterness and moistened a sleepless pillow with tears, they are able to perceive that adversity is preparing them for honor, though ere the honor comes the purified soul may have passed into that state where worth is its own reward ; where the light is that which emanates from the Lamb ; where the gladness is undimmed by sorrow, the joy is without alloy, and the honor is permanent.

Mordecai in blue and white and purple, with a crown of gold. Alas ! in a few years these were faded honors ; a grave inclosed all that remained.

“ The spider’s most attenuated thread is cord,
Is cable, to man’s feeble tie on earthly bliss.”

The insecure tenure by which we hold our possessions is only equalled by the brevity of the period through which we may call them our own.

The city of Shushan rejoiced. Are we to infer that many of the Persians sympathized with the Jews ? Probably. Those who rejoiced in the deliverance of the doomed may also have wept with them in their grief. Communities, which, like individuals, are subject to impulses, are occasionally stirred by movements which break on every threshold and swell in every heart, even as the waves of the ocean lave every shore. Perceiving that individuals are like drops of spray before the morning wind, they entertain the ardent hope that the objects for which so many are struggling may be realized, though it may be after the actors have been swept across the stream of time. A movement of this nature passed over the American continent on the death of Garfield, late

President of the United States. The spectacle was grand. What explanation can be given of an impulse so deep and so general? Does it find a solution in the fact that we honor ourselves when we unite in honoring the honorable? This at least is certain, the manifestation of a sentiment so laudable is as beneficent in its results as it is imposing in its unexampled grandeur. There is sublimity in the grief which moves a nation; tenderness in the sympathy of millions, as it flows in uninterrupted currents toward a common centre.

Than the sorrow of a nation, only one thing is grander—its rejoicing. Human nature seems less disposed to give expression to universal rejoicing than to universal grief. It seems easier for communities to weep with them that weep than to rejoice with them that rejoice. The bereavement that enters the stricken heart of a stranger elicits more sympathy than the joy that thrills a neighbor's soul. Accordingly, national expressions of joy are rare. Are we to accept this as evidence that gratitude is less frequent than repining? If a nation's expression of grief is grand, its expression of joy is grander still. Whether or not the Persians wept with the Jews when they were seemingly doomed, there appears to be little doubt that many of them rejoiced when the deliverance was effected. There is common ground upon which the representatives of all nations may meet.

In every province of the empire, whithersoever the king's decree came, the grateful Jews gave signs of joy. Their enemy had fallen. Mordecai was exalted. The queen was loyal to their interests. Ahasuerus had become a friend. They were permitted to defend themselves. Light in every home, gladness in every heart, feasting in every house, honor in every sanctuary—a

good time for all. God has interposed, rescuing a nation. Rejoice and be glad.

3. Persecution converts enemies into friends. When hostility fails in attaining its object, it is sometimes converted into friendship. Contempt that has done its worst to no purpose is occasionally transformed into admiration, the world being disposed to honor what it cannot crush. An unmurmuring endurance of persecution often forces even the unreflecting to consider, securing a lodgment for the truth in hearts that would not otherwise have opened to receive it. Of the church it may be said, as of most organizations, she incurs more risk of extinction from internal rot than from the embittered shafts of foes. Beneficent institutions are oftener shipwrecked upon the sands concealed beneath the calm waters of prosperity than upon the rugged rocks in adversity's tempestuous sea.

The condition of religion is not so disheartening when she is compelled to "take up arms against a sea of troubles" as when the siren songs of worldliness have wooed her into a condition which arouses no opposition and elicits no enthusiasm. Persecution may be rife, but in the manly effort to defend the truth,

"What though the field be lost?
All is not lost—the unconquerable will,"

this may transform enmity into friendship. "Sweet indeed are the uses of adversity."

"Though losses and crosses
Are lessons right severe,
There's wit to be found there
More freely than elsewhere."

Trials stimulate energies and reveal power hitherto unobserved. That which has sweetness gives forth its

richest fragrance when most pressed. Persecution, like the pain that accompanies the piercing of the maiden's ear, may be necessary in preparing a place where diamonds may glitter.

We scarcely marvel that as one of the results of the trials through which the Jewish church passed, "many of the people of the land became Jews." When enemies, in the use of illegitimate means, are striving to force religion into "the horrible pit," their efforts are quite likely to result in her enlargement. The cause which is maliciously opposed frequently secures new adherents, especially if it is bravely maintained, respect being created for those who have the manliness to defend invaded rights and the principle to adhere to settled convictions. Persecution, when endeavoring to destroy beliefs that are as deep as the soul and as immovable as the foundations of truth, is but hastening a triumph which is as certain as it is glorious.

Victories of the truth, such as is here described, are not so rare as might at first appear. The history of the church furnishes numerous examples; nor are they infrequent even in those humble spheres where heroism finds no chronicler. Many humble Christians, after long enduring persecution for righteousness' sake, have succeeded at last in winning friends for Christ from the number of his avowed enemies. Paul won converts to Christianity even in Cæsar's household. The Syrian maiden, though but a servant in the house of Naaman, secured respect for the religion of her fathers. The humblest believer may accomplish important results; indeed, the success of Christianity is more largely due to the unostentatious efforts of the lowly than to the ambitious endeavors of the great.

XIII.

THE INEVITABLE CONFLICT.

“Avaunt thee, horrid war, whose miasms, bred
Of nether darkness and Tartarean swamps,
Float o’er this fallen world, and blight the flowers,
Sole relics of a ruined Eden.”

E. H. BICKERSTETH.

BETWEEN truth and error there is an inevitable conflict, one which has been waging ever since God said in Eden, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.” Our Maker has promised to put hostility into the hearts of his people against Satan and his practices; and the fact that a struggle continues is conclusive evidence that he is verifying his promise; for, were it otherwise, there would be no conflict, man and Satan being in cordial alliance. Since goodness consists in opposition to sin and is aggressive in its nature, it must necessarily arouse hostility; nay, if goodness were destitute of the element of aggressiveness, the hostility of wickedness would precipitate a conflict or obliterate righteousness. As Satan has not surrendered his claim to the world, it is safe to affirm that where there is no resistance to evil there is little goodness. The Prince of this world has not fallen into the mistake, whoever else has, of supposing that his cause can triumph without effort. With him there is but one condition of peace—entire submission.

Aggressiveness is a marked trait in Satan’s character.

He is continuously endeavoring to acquire dominion. Christianity, therefore, is under the necessity of asserting its right to universal conquest, and determinedly endeavoring to secure it. There is but little use in remaining contentedly within an impregnable fortress, imagining that the enemy will capitulate at last, though he is conquering all the surrounding country and converting enmity into friendship.

The existence of moral evil—how a perfect being could sin, why omnipotent justice should permit the introduction of evil—is a profound mystery; one, however, which antedates the fall of Adam, for sin already had active representatives in the universe. There are mysteries here which man attempts in vain to solve. After plunging into the unfathomable depths and emerging with the dictum, “Sin originated in the freedom of the creature,” the mystery is unsolved still.*

* The efforts put forth by theologians, in successive centuries, to solve this enigma, reminds one of a legend connected with the name of Frederick, King of Sicily. Between his island home and the south of Italy there was a seething whirlpool, Charybdis. Near by projected from the waters the threatening rock, Scylla. It was a wild scene and so dangerous as to give rise to the expressive adage, “*Incidit in Scyllam, qui vult vitare Charybdim*”—who would avoid Scylla falls into Charybdis. The troubled waters heaved and roared and hissed and foamed as if some frantic demon was lashing them into fury. What mysterious power in the hidden depths kept up this incessant agitation? Who could tell? On the rugged peaks of Scylla stood Frederick; his daughter, fairest of Europe’s beauties, by his side. Silently the monarch is gazing into the boiling cauldron. He longs for an explanation of its concealed mysteries. He has offered gold from the treasury and honors from the court to the person who, diving into its depths, would reveal its wonders. Neither wealth nor station tempted any to brave the danger. More powerful than riches and more inspiring than honor is maiden’s love. The daughter,

“Fools are not planted; they grow themselves.” Persia’s boasted infallibility has inaugurated civil war. There are two parties, the Jews and their enemies, each having royal authority for an attack upon the other. The boast of wisdom has ended in the height of folly.

It is assumed by some that only the Amalekites appeared against the Jews. This may be true; but there is no evidence of it in the record. It is highly probable that these were the bitterest enemies the Jews had, and that they were the first to take up arms against their ancient and inveterate foes; but it is also reasonable to suppose that they may have imparted their bitterness to others, who may have equalled them, possibly surpassed them in fierceness. The enemies of the Jewish church no doubt belonged to several classes:

1. The Amalekites. Haman, though dead, lives in his ten sons, who, being the hereditary enemies of the Jews

turning her beaming eyes upon the crowd, shouted: “I proffer my hand and my heart to him who, diving into these depths, shall unravel this mystery.” Forth from the company stepped one whom his companions called “Nick, the Fish.” “I accept the challenge,” he said; “performing the task, I shall claim the prize.” Imprinting a kiss on the maiden’s cheek, he turns toward the sea. Unappalled either by the waves that dashed against Scylla or by the roar of distant Charybdis, he leaps into the deep. The restless waves close over him. All gaze in silence. Out from the billows his head and his arm are seen to emerge. A shout from the crowd goes up that makes the hills of Sicily ring. When the maiden again turns her eyes on the sea the form of her suitor has sunk to rise no more. The ripples murmured and the waves moaned, but his voice was silenced. The waters rose and the waters fell, but he rose no more. The explanation of ocean’s mysteries—which he died striving to solve—is unsolved still; and to man insoluble, so long at least as his powers are trammelled by the conditions of time.

The origin of evil, an inscrutable mystery.

and stung to madness by recent occurrences, are ready to risk everything in the wild effort to recover what they have lost.

2. Disappointed political aspirants. These, now that Mordecai is in power, would involve the nation in war if by so doing they could become intrusted with the affairs of state. With politicians this is often the law, "Rule or ruin."

3. The enemies of monotheism. These have always been numerous, and for the church to exist without arousing their hostility is as impossible as it would be dishonorable. In reference to them it may be said, with peculiar emphasis, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." Opposition to heaven-revealed religion, which commenced in the family of Adam—Cain refusing to obey divine commands—continued in each succeeding century; nor has it grown less virulent since the advent of Christ. The cross is a "stumbling-block" to some; "foolishness" to others; "an offence" to many.

4. The friends of paganism. To imagine that these, headed by the priesthood, were not hostile to the Jews is to close our eyes to the lessons of history. Fanaticism, bigotry and superstition—with these the church has always had to contend.

Two bitterly hostile factions—the hostility of each intensified by religious rancor—a conflict is inevitable.

How stands the case? The Jews by royal edict may resist attack; nay, they may slay their assailants and confiscate the property of all whom they can defeat. Their foes may kill, plunder and abuse any or all. Anarchy is bad enough; this is even worse. A day has been appointed on which it may be lawful to commit murder with impunity. Neighbor may rise against neighbor.

Reckless men may indulge their most brutal passions. Haman's sons may wreak vengeance on their detested foes, even on Mordecai and Esther. Every one holding malice against any Jew may satisfy his passion. A Persian, incited by cupidity, may slay any thriving Jew and appropriate his wealth. On the other hand, the Jew, if he desires to take revenge for any supposed insult, can easily pretend that he has been assailed. To bring him to justice subsequently, will be nearly impossible. Those bearing the Jewish name, though entirely destitute of religion, may run riot in crime, and enrich themselves from the property of the weak. Evidently the new decree is not adapted to allay the excitement, but to increase it. Lawlessness rendered lawful—can there be a worse condition than this? It looks as if there was a Niagara before the Persian empire; and after, what then?

The fatal day, the thirteenth of the month Adar, has arrived. It is the day on which the enemies of the Jew hope to have "power over them." He who chose it by lot—deeming it a lucky day—has not lived to witness the reign of terror. The guiltiest has paid the penalty; now the innocent must suffer. One unjust law has been the father of a second; now all classes must endure anguish. In such crises (which are not infrequent in the histories of nations), the continuance of existing institutions, or the introduction of those deemed more fruitful of good, depends, in large measure, almost exclusively upon those who are possessed of intelligence, discretion and principle; depends in Christian lands very largely upon the sterling good sense of the religious. England, according to the testimony of Mr. Froude and Lord Macaulay, owes a large debt of gratitude to the Christian Church. It was her members whose loyalty maintained government during the convulsions which shook the state from the throne to

the humblest peasant's cottage. Obedience to human law, till submission becomes disloyalty to divine law, is an obligation which Christians have generally shown themselves ready to recognize. Though not guilty of exercising blind faith in existing institutions, but toiling unweariedly to introduce reformatory measures when these seemed necessary, they have, nevertheless, manifested becoming forbearance in being slow to introduce changes till times were ripe for reform, and well-considered measures could be introduced as a substitute for those which experience had proved defective in important particulars. While clearly perceiving that there is a continuous struggle for truth, for goodness and for God, they have not been unmindful of the fact that anarchy best suits the Prince of darkness; that, consequently, it is "better to endure the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of." The friends of order and of good government can well afford to wait God's time. Until that time comes it is not wise to incur the risks which accompany the removal of barriers, which, however imperfect they may be, measurably restrain the wild waves of human passion.

On the arrival of the fatal day the Jews were in better condition than could have been anticipated. The power of the government was to be exerted in their behalf. Mordecai was prime-minister. Officers that were inimical to the interests of the Jews have been removed. Those whose conduct excite suspicion can be carefully watched. The guards of the garrison are ready for any emergency. The magistrates, the lieutenants, the governors, the captains—all officers of the crown—are under orders to aid the Jews.

Time, and encouragement from Mordecai, secured another result, perhaps the most important—the Jews

gathered themselves together in defensive companies. With the Jew, lack of ability to organize seems to have been the most serious obstacle to the maintenance of nationality. In this respect, however, Mordecai seems to have been an exception ; he rendered his people formidable, and no doubt saved many lives by uniting them in all the cities throughout the empire. This also will relieve them from the odium attaching to the lawlessness which may characterize some who profess Judaism—preserving religion from dishonor. Moreover, it will make it evident that their defence is not a matter of personal revenge, but fidelity to a principle in which an entire nation is interested ; indeed, it will tend to the preservation of life, for when it becomes known that they are thoroughly organized their enemies will be less likely to attack them. Verily, Mordecai is wisely employing the power he possesses. Apparently, he has the skill, the perseverance and the industry to insure deliverance from the evils which the act of Haman is threatening to thousands.

It is an evidence of intense animosity on the part of the Persians that the Jews were disturbed after they had completed such extensive preparations for self-defence ; but when men have commenced a course of spiteful action it is difficult to discontinue so long as there seems to be any chance of inflicting further injury. So intense is the malice in which the arrows of spitefulness are steeped that the voice of prudence, even of reason, is effectually silenced.

In explanation of conduct so unreasonable, it may be proper to surmise that during the two months previous to Haman's fall, some Persians may have selected their victims and announced their purpose. Consequently, consistency and the fear of being taunted with cowardice

may have induced them to attempt the fulfilment of threatenings which calmer judgment, under the altered circumstances, would not have sanctioned. Fear of incurring shame not infrequently goads men to continue a course of conduct which is quite certain to eventuate in disaster and which they recognize as tending ruinward.

In explanation of the assistance rendered by the rulers of the provinces, by the lieutenants, by the deputies and by officers appointed by the king, the record employs this expression : "The fear of Mordecai fell upon them." Well might they fear to disobey the last edict ; for it had a living representative, one possessing ability, energy and determination. Had he been a weakling, it would have been prudent to fear him, since he held the key to the situation. "A living dog," especially when guarding his master's rights, and he a sovereign—"is better than a dead lion." Mordecai was great in the king's house. His fame went throughout all the provinces. He was waxing greater and greater.

It is quite probable that the increasing influence of Mordecai exasperated the Persians, thereby impelling them to acts of violence which were as imprudent as they were cruel. Envy of another's rising greatness is a powerful agency in arousing opposition. It is a force which the successful are almost invariably called upon to encounter. As a rule, power and influence are only acquired by the conquest of envious opposition ; and when acquired they have still to wage an almost incessant warfare with the animosity which is engendered by "this green-eyed monster," which is stung to fury by the sight of another's prosperity. The man of power, whatever his situation in life, is apt to discover that, in many instances, either envy or jealousy—others' pain on seeing him prosper or their fear lest his success may diminish

something they already possess—is the concealed fountain whence flow the bitterest streams of enmity. This it is which renders his foes so exceedingly unreasonable, and impels them to acts of violence which are as imprudent as they are heartless.

“What made the man of envy what he was,
Was worth in others, vileness in himself ;
A lust of praise with undeserving deeds,
And conscious poverty of soul ; and still
It was his earnest work and daily toil
With lying tongue to make the noble seem
Mean as himself.”

“Yet is there one more cursed than they all,
That canker-worm, that monster, Jealousy,
Which eats the heart and feeds upon the gall,
Turning all life's delights to misery.”

We probably should not greatly err were we to affirm that envy, especially as it was the outgrowth of religious bigotry, was the chief cause of the violent onset upon the Jews under circumstances which gave so little promise of success. Those who fell as Mordecai rose, and were sinking into deeper obscurity as he increased in favor with the monarch, would be certain to entertain feelings of revenge. All who were strongly attached to the religion of the realm would be sure to embrace any opportunity, even the least promising, to humiliate those whose form of faith was rapidly acquiring power and public favor.

On the fatal day the palace in Shushan, as might be expected, was the centre of the fiercest attack. Evidently it was not a mere fancy which prompted the Queen's cousin to say : “Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews.” Within it were Mordecai and Esther, persons included in the number whom the first edict designated for slaughter.

Moreover, it was through their influence that the second decree was promulgated. The enemies, therefore, would rather slay these than hundreds of other Jews. With the death of Mordecai, some Persian noble may become prime-minister, and the religion of the state will be no longer endangered by this rival which the people are beginning to court. Judaism will be effectually humbled. If Esther is slain, the fickle heart of the king will be subject to new influences. The plan is certainly wise. If they are to enter into the struggle, it is good policy to make the main attack upon the palace.

This attack was led apparently by the Amalekites. Haman's ten sons, burning with revenge and deeply mortified at the odium which attached to their father's memory, were prominent among the assailants. Their desperation is evidenced by the fact that all were slain.

“Such men quite often waste their proper strength ;
They sacrifice themselves and theirs,
In the silly hope to butcher those they hate,
And die to make experiment of wrath.”

In the royal city five hundred perished on that day ; in the provinces, seventy-five thousand, if we accept the numbers of the Hebrew text. A fearful carnage, and yet only an average of six hundred to each of the provinces of the empire ; consequently, there is nothing incredible in the statement, and especially as the age was an exceedingly barbarous one, and the day one of lawless violence. The Septuagint version, however, gives the number as fifteen hundred, which is perhaps more nearly correct.

Of the victorious Jews it is thrice said, “They laid not their hands on the prey.” By thus restraining themselves they gave evidence that they were not actuated by

improper motives, but were simply acting in self-defence. They maintained their character. They practised self-control. They indulged in no outrages.

It certainly appears somewhat strange that Esther requested royal permission to continue the slaughter in Shushan on the following day. It looks as if the Jews did not merit our sympathy ; as if they were as cruel as their enemies. If in the hour of their deliverance, they deliberately doomed those whom they had vanquished, it seems as though there was but little reason to conclude that the Jews were less cruel than their foes. It should be observed, however, that she only solicited authority for the Jews in Shushan "to do to-morrow also according unto this day's decree," grant us permission to slay those who assail us. It is fair to assume that she imagined the attack might be renewed, and that emergencies might arise calling for royal authority to slay any who might be disposed to resume the struggle under the apprehension that unauthorized resistance, on the part of the Jews, might be interpreted as disloyalty. Special necessities—of which no mention is made in the narrative—may have induced her to make the request. It is at least quite safe to conclude that the object was not personal revenge, but national security. Her character, as sketched in the sacred narrative, scarcely justifies us in concluding that she was actuated by any other motive than a regard to the public weal. Assuredly she has the right to petition the king to grant the Jews the legal right to take life in self-defence.

Her request that the bodies of Haman's ten sons should be hanged on a tree is perhaps susceptible of a similar charitable interpretation. It does not necessarily indicate a desire to take revenge upon her foes ; since a public spectacle of this nature may have been, in her judgment,

the most effectual method of striking terror into the souls of any who might be tempted to disturb the public peace. Nations are made up of individuals; and these may be restrained from crime by being forced to witness the penalties endured by those already convicted.

From this account we are certainly justified in inferring that the right of self-defence is inalienable. The Saviour commands, it is true, "Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other;" but it is not to be supposed that he intends to teach that we should offer no resistance should an enemy continue to invade our rights for an indefinite period of time, much less that we must bare our neck to the stroke, and suffer death from an exasperated foe, without any attempt at self-defence. Christianity recognizes the fact that forbearance may cease to be a virtue; that the un murmuring endurance of wrong, if too much protracted, encourages an invasion of one's liberties—is, in fact, paying a price for the renewal of insults.

Self-defence, however, especially when it results in taking the life of another, is subject to certain well-defined conditions:

1. There must be the plea of necessity. It must be certain that we are forced to choose between invading the rights of another and surrendering our own; the presumption must be so strong as to make it appear that non-resistance is quite evidently fraught with imminent peril. We may not injure another till calm reason gives her testimony that not to do is to incur immediate and serious injury.

2. Nothing more must be done, if possible, than is demanded by the preservation of one's own life. If a blow that is not fatal will answer the purpose, and can be administered, it should be. Assuredly a nation has

the right to take life in order to perpetuate its own existence ; but the sacrifice should be as small as is consistent with the procurement of the coveted result.

3. Nothing must be done beyond self-defence. No effort must be made to take advantage of the embarrassments of those whom we have overcome. The Jews laid not their hands upon the spoil, though the law authorized them to do so.

4. As far as possible, emotions of revenge must be banished from the mind. This world, in which we have but a brief stay, is no place to manifest angry feelings, however many the provocations may be. The grave will soon be the tomb of all animosity—where friend and foe shall dwell together in peace. Why, therefore, should we not live without embittering our own lives and the lives of others ? If we are so unfortunate as to be called upon to defend honor, or property, or life, let us do so kindly, manfully, if necessary, vigorously ; but with no resentment. When the opposition has ceased, let us be the first to embrace our foes and convert them into friends.

Several thousands, launched on one day into an untried world ! It is not a thing so infrequent as to call for special notice. The tides of humanity, like waves of the ocean, are ceaselessly breaking on eternity's shores. Individuals are but as the drops of vapor which rise heavenward as the warm sun rests on the cool flood—like sympathy on the chilled heart of sorrow. Millions of glittering drops, noiseless as true love, rise into the expanse ; gathered into clouds and borne on the wings of the wind, they journey, like the apostles of the cross, on missions of mercy to distant lands ; a part of ocean, they hasten back to their great father, descending now in torrents, now in refreshing showers, now in transparent

hail, now in crystal snow-flakes ; absorbed by the thirsty earth, the morning sun reveals them as dew-drops, kissing the rose-bud, glittering on the blade of grass, or waving in sunbeams on the forest-leaf ; they are serving their Creator in missions of love as they are hastening homeward ; joining with companions, they form the rill, rushing down the mountain, meandering through the meadow, leaping over the precipice, entering the river, aiding to convey commercial products to distant lands, swelling in the gulf, and at last sleeping once more on the bosom of the all-embracing ocean—their mission ended ; like to these are individuals on earth—coming forth from the bosom of the Father, journeying through the earth, each on his mission, falling back again upon the bosom of the all-embracing Father. How beautifully the Psalmist exclaims, “ All the rivers run into the sea, and yet the sea is not full ”—all the generations of humanity crowd into eternity, and yet eternity is not full—all descend into the grave ; the grave still cries, “ Give ”—each disappears and is forgotten as those that went before. “ So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

It perhaps ought not to strike us with surprise that revealed religion, though coming from heaven, should cause divisions and strifes. It could not be otherwise ; but from earth's bitter warfare comes heaven's sweet peace. “ These are they which have come out of great tribulation.”

This struggle between the church and the world, or rather between the children of God and the adherents of Satan, though as old as the human family, is ever taking on new forms. Anciently, it was Cain against Abel ; in Egypt, the Pharaohs against the decendants of Abraham ; in Palestine, the Canaanites against the Israelites ;

later, the Philistines against the children of the covenant ; in subsequent centuries, the formalists against the prophets ; in the Saviour's time, Phariseism against the new form of faith that was bursting through the incrustations of ages ; in the apostolic period, paganism against living Christianity ; in Luther's time, ignorance and superstition against religious convictions ; now, worldliness against the form of practical Christianity that is toiling to ameliorate the condition of humanity.

We need not grow disheartened. Truth will triumph.

“ Put thou thy trust in God,
In duty's path go on ;
Fix on his word thy steadfast gaze,
So shall thy work be done.”

Lord Derby, in one of his speeches, observed : “ An accomplished nobleman said to me the other day that he thought England had steadily declined in those qualities which make up the force and strength of national character since the days of Waterloo ; and though he did not say so in words, yet from his manner and tone I inferred that he thought it was too late to hope for a recovery ; that the deluge was coming, and that happy were they who had almost lived their lives, and would not survive to see the catastrophe. Of course it is possible that such a catastrophe will come, and given certain conditions, it is certain to come.”

Of the same tenor is the warning of the late Dr. Norman Macleod : “ The confusion that exists at this moment, which began soon after the war of 1815, and is as eventful as the Reformation, is most oppressive. On the one hand, there is a breaking up of the old forms of thought about everything — social, political, scientific, philosophic, theological. In spite of much foolish con-

ceit and sense of power on the part of those who guide the battering rams against the old walls, there is on the part of many more a great sense of the paramount importance of truth and duty, which, if rightly considered, would express faith in God, who is ever on the side of truth. . . . We ignore great world-questions. We squabble like fish-women over skate and turbot."

Most of us are disposed to question a coming deluge. We believe that ultimate triumph is assured, come what may, in the near future. "Towers are measured by the length of their shadows;" a great cause by the intensity of the calumny that is heaped upon it. God is bestowing blessings abundantly; "hold all skirts of thy garments extended when heaven is raining gold." The conflict rages fiercely, it is true, but let us remember, "The fox thrives best when he is abused." There are hopeful signs as well as disheartening ones. Religion, perhaps, was never more active than now. There are many persons of sterling integrity, persons whom neither place nor gold can purchase, who are resolved to remain honest—though they may never be able to pay their debts. There is most probably more sympathy with men than ever before—though some is shown in making them drunkards; more philanthropy—though some originates in selfishness; more self-sacrifice—though selfishness still lives; more interest in the success of missions abroad—though heathenism exists at home; more time expended in developing character—though characterless persons as yet command no premium; more of the kindness that sweetens human existence, and more of all those qualities which ennoble humanity.

True, Christianity is not as aggressive as she was in primitive ages; but she is ever tending to renew her youth. She is not as active as could be desired; but she

is commendably so. Like the Jews in Esther's time, she has the disposition to defend her invaded rights. It may be that persecution would remove much that burdens her now—would purify her motives and deepen her convictions ; it is quite certain that it would find her ranks full of those who were consecrated to her welfare.

Marvellous is the power which attaches to a single purpose resolutely pursued. Napoleon affirmed, "The truest wisdom is a resolute determination." Another has said, "With a strong soul and a noble aim, one can do what one wills, morally speaking." Esther resolved on effecting the deliverance of her people ; difficulties but fired her energies. "The longer I live," said Buxton, "the more I am certain that the great difference between men, between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant, is energy—invincible determination—a purpose once formed and then death or victory. That quality will do anything that can be done in this world ; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities, will make a two-legged creature a man without it." A famous Norseman once said, "I believe neither in idols nor demons. I put my sole trust in my own strength of body and soul." A portion of the sentiment we may not be disposed to indorse—believing, as we do, in an overruling Providence—but it will be difficult to deny that few qualities are more likely to insure success than a strong purpose—the will to achieve and the power to persevere. This can accomplish all that is possible of accomplishment. It even subdued the will of Ahasuerus, rendering his folly the avenue through which Esther's purpose steadily marched forward to conquest. As in Napoleon's case, so in that of Ahasuerus, intense selfishness drew down calamities upon himself, and upon his subjects as well.

A few lessons, brief, pointed, sententious :
Perplexity and toil are the heritage of mortals.

Wisdom, the true, renders one good ; goodness procures him friends ; friends secure him influence.

The blessings we enjoy are procured by suffering ; each is the representative of some one's anguish.

Beneficent institutions are the legacy of great men.

The best security of the state is individual character—better than laws, better than armies.

Kindness rules the woman ; the woman rules the home ; the home rules the man.

With ability to control one's self, and to command all the powers of the mind, moderate talents achieve important results.

Only one person can injure me—myself : God will not ; he will reward me to the full extent of my worth, and simply permit me to incur the penalties of my own misdeeds—only this, nothing more.

Expect the covetous to enjoy the luxury of giving, repeat a catalogue of your virtues to your malicious enemy, but do not imagine that the joys of heaven can be appreciated by those who are not prepared for them while on earth.

XIV.

A MEMORIAL OF DELIVERANCE.

“ The bird that in the evening sings
Leaves music when her song is ended ;
A sweetness left, which takes not wings,
But with each pulse of eve is blended :
Thus life involves a double light,
Our acts and words have many brothers ;
The heart that makes its own delight
Makes also a delight for others.”

CHARLES SWAIN.

ON the thirteenth day of the month Adar—the sixth month in the civil year of the Jews and the twelfth of their ecclesiastical, corresponding with the latter part of February and the former part of March—the Jews observe a fast, or, more strictly speaking, commemorate Esther's fast. Services are held in the synagogue in commemoration of the deliverance recorded to have been effected by Esther and Mordecai. If the thirteenth day is a Sabbath, the fast is put back to the fifth day of the week. In an intercalary year, the month of Adar occurring twice, the fast is celebrated moderately in the intercalary month, and with full pomp in the ensuing month. The former is designated “ The Lesser Purim ;” the latter, “ The Greater.”

On the evening of the fourteenth, as soon as the stars begin to appear, they light candles in token of rejoicing, and the people, men, women, and children, assemble in

the synagogue. A brief prayer is offered. Thanksgivings are rendered. Thereupon the Chazan, or reader, translates into the vernacular the entire book of Esther and makes comments thereon. Every time the name of Haman is pronounced the audience stamp with their feet and cry out, "Let the memory of the wicked perish." Curses are heaped upon the perished race of the Amalekites. The children, with mallets provided for the occasion, and on which is inscribed the name of Haman, strike on the walls and seats. The names of the ten sons of Haman are uttered as one word, in continuous enunciation, to signify that all were hanged at once. When the reading is completed, the audience shout, "Cursed be Haman; blessed be Mordecai: cursed be Zorash; blessed be Esther: cursed be all idolaters; blessed be all Israelites: blessed be Harbonah who hanged Haman." It seems probable that in former times the Christians and the Persians were the objects of similar maledictions.

The vellum is then carefully rolled up, and the people go away to partake of a meal consisting mostly of eggs and milk.

On the ensuing day the services are repeated, with the addition of the reading of the passage (1 Sam. 15 : 8), which gives an account of the destruction of the Amalekites. All are commanded to be present, even invalids and idiots. The religious services over, all give themselves to rejoicing. There are games, and music accompanied with dancing. Presents are sent to friends, and portions to the poor. Wine is freely indulged in.

The ceremonies connected with this feast in all likelihood differ somewhat from those employed at its establishment; still it is substantially the same feast which Mordecai proposed, and which was objected to at first by

a large number of the elders. It was designed, and is continued, as a memorial of the deliverance effected by Esther.

It cannot be denied that it has proved itself well adapted to the end for which it was designed. As a memorial it has been more enduring most probably than any other that could have been devised.

Different means have been employed by different nations and in different ages to perpetuate the memory of great events. We are told (Gen. 31 : 45), "Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar." Again (Gen. 5 : 51) : "Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee ; this heap be witness and this pillar be witness that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar to me." When the children of Israel had passed over Jordan, "Joshua took twelve stones and pitched them in Gilgal." "And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask your fathers in times to come, saying, What mean these stones ? then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israël came over this Jordan on dry land."

"After Achan and his family were stoned and burned, Israel raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day." The king of Ai was buried under a great heap of stones ; as was also Absalom, who had previously "reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale ; for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." Alexander the Great caused a tumulus to be erected over the grave of his friend Hephæstion, costing a million and a half of dollars. Virgil makes mention of memorial stones ; as does also Homer.

Standing-stones, or "menhirs," were also erected in memorial of particular events ; and stone-circles, con-

structed with the same design most probably, were so numerous that they may be found even yet in almost every country—in the Orkneys, in Russia, in Hindostan, in Africa, in Greenland, in America, in all parts of Europe. The most remarkable are Stonehenge and Abury, in England.

Although megalithic structures of almost every variety, and commemorative most probably of the lives of eminent personages or of important national events, exist in nearly every land—pre-eminently in Egypt, where vast pyramids tower above the plain, representatives of buried generations; yet in most instances there is no knowledge of the events they were designed to commemorate. Memorials they quite evidently are, but of what, who can tell?

As a means of transmitting events to succeeding generations, a simple ceremony, committed to those who sympathize with the cause in which the observance originated, is far more effective than even the most imposing monumental structure which art has devised, strength erected, or wealth adorned. The latter is dumb; the former has loving hearts and living tongues to perpetuate the memory of deeds that once stirred human souls and distilled blessings upon the world. The celebration of the Fourth of July is likely to prove more satisfactory, as a memorial of our national birthday, than any other monument which the energy and liberality of the people could have reared. The facts connected with our history are not graven on stone to be effaced in subsequent ages by the ruthless hands of embittered enemies, or to puzzle the learned in a period when the English language has either perished or has so far altered that the record is an insoluble enigma; but are intrusted to those who take pride in transmitting them to posterity, re-

counting the heroism of our forefathers through the ever-changing vehicle of language, thereby erecting self-perpetuating monuments in living hearts. Though it seems somewhat strange, it is nevertheless scarcely susceptible of denial that the printed page, and a simple memorial service statedly performed, are more efficient transmitters of important events than marble shafts, imposing pyramids, or ambitious obelisks. The monuments erected by the Persian monarchs have mostly perished. The exploits of the powerful Ahasuerus, though they may have been recorded on stone, are now known mainly by virtue of their having found a place on the printed page, especially in the sacred volume. From this source, by the simple agency of an annual ceremony, they have been kept fresh in the memory of each succeeding generation, and will be as long as the church exists on earth. In the rites connected with the feast of Purim, Mordecai and Esther have a more enduring monument than the Egyptian monarch who erected the pyramid of Gizeh, or the Pharaoh who constructed the marvellous Labyrinth. In confirmation of the theory that a ceremony is more effective as a memorial than dolmens, or menhirs, or cromlechs, or artificial mounds, or hieroglyphics graven on stone, I have only to remind you that the touching incidents connected with the life and death of our adorable Lord have been conveyed to the human family in a most remarkable manner by the Eucharist. The eating of bread and the drinking of wine, simple as the acts are, have proved an enduring memorial of his sufferings, his life, and his death ; nay, more, the ceremony has been an embodiment of most precious doctrines, announcing the vicarious nature of his sacrifice, and the necessity of our appropriating the benefits of his death “to our spiritual nourishment and growth in him ; a perpetual

reminder of our engagement in and to all duties which we owe to him, and a bond and pledge of our communion with him and with each other, as members of his mystical body.”

A combination of a record written at the time, with such an observance as shall keep it alive in human hearts—rendering each succeeding generation familiar with it and interested in its transmission—is quite manifestly the most efficient memorial that can be employed—more efficient than polished sentences graven on marble, or legends connected with megalithic structures, or accounts handed down from parents to children through the ever-varying medium of uncertain tradition. The written record tends to secure accuracy. The interest excited by the observance of some simple ceremony prevents the facts from sinking into oblivion. The wide extent to which the incidents become known is the best security against a corruption of the account.

The feast of Purim, though a “holy-day” with the Jews, is not observed by the Christian; the Jewish Sabbath is. Why observe the one religiously, and ignore the other entirely? Because the one is a divine appointment; the other was instituted by man—because the one is an obligation unlimited in duration and universal in extent; the other can only be of binding force upon the nation specially interested therein—because the one is consecrated to the eternal interests of an undying soul; the other is but a feast sacred to the memory of perishable mortals—because one is time that God has never relinquished to man; the other is a day relinquished by Jews for the commemoration of events, which, though calling for the gratitude of all believers, are nevertheless not of such a nature as to demand public recognition from Christians—because one was established prior to the

organization of the Jewish Church, and neither is nor ever has been so restricted in its obligations as those Jewish laws which were merely national in their character and temporary in their nature ; the other originated long subsequent to the establishment of the Church in the family of Abraham, and has not, even upon the Jews, the same binding force as the rite of circumcision, and much less than the command announced on Sinai, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Nor should we fail to observe—even on the supposition that the feast of Purim is to be regarded as of divine appointment, because we have an inspired account of its institution—that the Jews themselves recognize the superior sanctity of the Sabbath ; which their fathers sanctified ere they came to Mount Sinai, and which our first parents observed even in their estate of innocency. Evidently, therefore, the Sabbath is not a Jewish ordinance. It was kept by our Lord, who came to abolish ordinances that were distinctively Jewish. Its observance was enjoined by the apostles, though they strenuously maintained that laws which were merely Jewish were not binding upon Christians. Nothing that is said in the New Testament can be legitimately interpreted as intimating that it was abrogated, or its obligations weakened in any measure whatever. Paul speaks, it is true, of those who esteem one day above another ; who observe days and seasons and months and years, and commands us to let no man judge us in respect to new-moons, or "holy-days," since these are but the shadows of good things to come ; but it would be an evident perversion of language to assume that he intended to teach anything else than that Christians were released from observances merely ceremonial. They were not to regard those days sacred which rested on no higher authority than the teachings

of Judaism. He simply affirms that the observance of those festival-days which were regarded as sacred by the Jews was not binding upon Christians. He seems to have perceived, as many since have, that the appointment of sacred days by human authority tends to impair the sanctity of the Sabbath. "Nevertheless, to observe days of fasting and thanksgiving, as the extraordinary dispensations of Divine Providence may direct, we judge both scriptural and rational."

Though, as Christians, we are under no obligation to observe the feast of Purim, we are certainly at liberty to accept it as a model for thanksgiving services. Communities, states and nations have frequent occasion to return thanksgivings to that beneficent Father, "before whom all the nations of the earth are as nothing, or as the small dust of the balance." The blessings he confers are oft-times so general as to be very properly designated national. They call, consequently, for national recognition. They summon us to appear in our usual places of worship and engage in a service of thanksgiving, erecting in our hearts, and in community, memorials of gratitude for blessings which he has kindly vouchsafed, though we have been unmindful of his goodness, disobedient to his commands, and regardless of our highest interests. Encircled as we are by worldliness, infatuated by folly, subject to selfishness, and careless of eternity, we are prone to forget our many obligations to Him who pours upon us the full horn of plenty and effects deliverance from embarrassments which might have overwhelmed us in universal disaster. Even when some merciful interposition has unexpectedly laid us under renewed obligations to give expression to feelings of gratitude, as when victory and honor have suddenly effaced the footsteps of defeat and humiliation, or abundance has displaced want,

or the breath of pestilence has been stayed by the hand of God, how slow we are to give visible expression to our thanksgivings by sending portions to the poor ! We receive blessings innumerable from the Almoner of the universe, and instead of being the dispensers of gifts to the less highly favored, we are disposed to cry continually, " Give, give, give."

" Praise to God, immortal praise,
For the love that crowns our days ;
Bounteous Source of every joy,
Let thy praise our tongues employ."

" Gold thou mayest safely touch ; but if it sticks unto thy hands, it woundeth to the quick."

" What skills it if a bag of stones or gold
About thy neck do drown thee ? Raise thy head ;
Take stars for money ; stars not to be told
By any art yet to be discovered."

" God's love hath to us wealth upheaped ;
Only by giving is it reaped.
The body withers, and the mind
If pent in by selfish rind.
Give strength, give thought, give deeds, give pelf,
Give love, give tears, and give thyself ;
Who gives not is not living.
The more we give,
The more we live."

" See the rivers flowing
Downward to the sea,
Pouring all their treasures
Bountiful and free ;
Yet, to help their giving,
Hidden springs arise ;
Or, if need be, showers
Feed them from the skies."

We seem to forget that our Saviour, when feeding the five thousand, gave bread to the disciples, to be by them distributed to the multitude.

The feast instituted by Mordecai was a memorial of personal as well as of national deliverance. It commemorated his own escape from perplexity, from trouble, from grief, from death. Can there be anything unbecoming in our raising in our hearts memorials of gratitude for the gracious interpositions of Heaven which mark our journey through life? Would not this practice tend to cultivate emotions of gratitude? Would it not tutor us to discern the merciful hand of our Father, and aid us very materially in maintaining cheerfulness under the clouds of darkness that so often environ us? One whom we loved as life itself has been gently lifted from the doorway of death, and is journeying by our side in health, bright with cheer, helpful and hopeful. May we not very properly rear our monument of praise, and amid tears of rejoicing exclaim, "He who delivered us once will deliver us again"? One of the plants of our home conservatory has been taken, it may be, to the palace of the Great King. We are permitted to say, "It shall not return to me; I shall go to it." Let us raise our monument of thanksgiving. A child, dedicated by baptism to God in infancy, has chosen the paths of righteousness, delivering our hearts from anxiety and touching our lips with praise; imitating the example of Mordecai, let us erect our monument of gratitude.

Nor need we confine our expressions of thankfulness to Divine interpositions such as these. Poverty, it may be, in its more disheartening form at least, has folded wings and departed from our home, leaving cheer and plenty where gloom and want once seemed to have permanent residence. Let us joyously sing, "God in his

goodness has provided for the poor." Weary and worn, we had fallen down, it may be, by the roadside, despondency prompting the prayer of Elijah: "Take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers;" lo, a Divine hand touched us, lifted us up, strengthened us, cheered us, and bade us press toward the celestial city. At another time we had wandered, perhaps, from our Father's house, and were contentedly journeying in a far-off country, where, after spending our substance, and almost forfeiting our birthright, we might have fallen so low as to have attempted the impossible task of satisfying the soul by feeding it upon that which, being food only for beasts, could do no more than temporarily dull the sense of hunger. God's Spirit whispered, "Return; come, and welcome; come!"

Nor is it difficult to discover methods in which we may erect memorials of gratitude. "The poor we have always with us." The call for funds with which to sustain agencies for the enlightenment of humanity is ever loud. Ignorance and superstition, immorality and irreligion, infidelity and heartless indifference to the woes of humanity are continuously calling upon us to "honor God with our substance." Though we may be unable to assume the pecuniary responsibility of sustaining an efficient agency for the moral and religious elevation of the human family, we are at least able to contribute our mites; and these, in company with the gifts of others, may aid in doing a work as beneficent in its nature as it is enduring in its results. The gifts we bestow, and the agency we thereby aid, become our memorial of blessings received—our own monument, and none the less ours because others aided in its erection. We may each enjoy the pleasing reflection that for every deliverance which God has vouchsafed to us, we have reared, by

contributing of our substance to his cause, a little monument to his praise—a memorial whose value to us, and to the world as well, is not measured by the small pitance contributed, but by the nobility of soul which prompted the sacrifice.

There is, it must be conceded, some results flowing from charity which we might wish were otherwise. The giver, by enjoying too frequently the experience of Job—"When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me"—may become proud in his liberality, insolent in manner, and somewhat unreasonable in his demands, particularly in exacting consideration from the recipients of his favors. For this there is perhaps a partial corrective in the conduct of those who after receiving gifts are the first to hurl arrows at the reputation of the giver. The ungenerous, as if for the purpose of convincing the world that they have not surrendered independence, are sometimes foremost in injuring him, especially if they no longer need his assistance, or if the relief they covet is resolutely withheld. Apparently, there are those whom charity transforms into enemies. Possibly, there are but few who cannot number among their foes some whom their own kindness has largely aided in rendering hostile.

Nor are the receivers of benefactions entirely exempt from the possibility of receiving injury. The reception of charity may tend to destroy the sense of manliness. It may encourage indolence. It may weaken energies that are already too much enfeebled. It may dull the edge of self-respect.

Though there are dangers lurking in charity, we are quite safe, in the present age, in urging all to cultivate most assiduously the grace of liberality. Let us enter the homes of the neglected poor with a Bible in one hand

and bread in the other. Let us strive to manifest royal munificence in supporting the agencies of the Church by which she is endeavoring to proclaim the truth to the destitute masses of the land—"to every creature."

The feast instituted by Mordecai was designed to be—

1. A memorial of rest. The Jews rested. The power of their enemies being broken, they were no longer tormented by fears. When the believer's struggles with sin are over, "for him there remaineth a rest," an eternal Sabbath.
2. A memorial of joy. The feast was evidently designed to be a commemoration of the joy felt by the Jews over their deliverance from the power of their enemies. He who has taken refuge in Christ may partake of that feast which commemorates the "joy of redemption," a joy unspeakable and full of glory, a foretaste of the joy that awaits the soul when it shall stand in the presence of "the King of kings," clothed in "the robes of Christ's righteousness." Meanwhile, we sing our "songs of deliverance," in the assured hope that the present vestments of sorrow shall be exchanged for "garments of praise;" the sackcloth of penitence for robes of acceptance.
3. A memorial of triumph. The feast commemorated victory. The believer may look forward to complete victory, when, like Moses, he may shout, "The Lord hath triumphed gloriously;" "those mine enemies, I shall see them again no more forever."

We ought not to close the consideration of this narrative without reminding you that the mere continuance of the feast to the present day is cogent testimony to the truth of the account. It is scarcely possible to conceive that the feast could have been instituted and perpetuated unless it had a foundation in fact. The celebration of the Fourth of July by the American people is no more conclusive evidence of the Declaration of Independence

than is the feast of Purim of the deliverance recorded in the book of Esther.

To complete our consideration of this portion of the inspired volume, we need to dwell a few moments on the concluding chapter, which recounts the greatness of Ahasuerus, and of Mordecai as well.

The greatness of the monarch is seen—

1. The character of his government. “He laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.” This may have been done at the suggestion of Mordecai, and may have been a reformatory measure. Possibly it was a judicious system of taxation, designed to displace some obnoxious method of raising money for the public treasury. A direct tax, bearing equitably upon all classes and sufficient to maintain government is a method of raising money for governmental purposes far preferable to the unjust and oppressive measures so common in eastern countries. This at least is certain: the imposition of a tax on one hundred and twenty-seven provinces and on the isles of the sea attests the extent of the kingdom ruled by Ahasuerus, who perhaps was as despicable in character as he was lofty in official station.

2. In the acquiescence of his subjects. That the monarch was tyrannical there can be no question; still, the people submitted. It is never wise to engage in rebellion against a power which can immediately enforce submission; and which, even though it may delay the day of vengeance, is certain to mete out full penalties to the violators of irreversible laws. And yet such folly is manifested by many subjects of the King Eternal. They not only engage in open rebellion, but abuse forbearance, encouraging themselves in transgression because “sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily.” Folly, as ruinous as it is unreasonable.

The greatness of Mordecai is seen —

1. In the contrast existing between his present and his former position. To rise by self-exertion from obscurity to eminence is quite conclusive proof of greatness of character. To rise to influence from humble origin is as clear an evidence of intrinsic merit as it is of honorable endeavor and unflagging energy.

2. In the fact that his severest trials became the avenue through which he ascended to fame ; indeed, they prepared him for the honorable position to which he attained.

3. In his reaching the pinnacle of greatness by simple fidelity to principle and unwearied diligence. His elevation may have been the result of Haman's malice ; but unquestionably it was largely due to his own integrity of character.

4. In his employing the influence he acquired, not for selfish ends, but to promote the welfare of his people. His influence extended throughout one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, and seems to have been exerted as a beneficent statesman.

In conclusion, a few brief lessons—

He who fills well the position he occupies thereby effectually recommends himself to a higher.

Nothing is lost by maintaining integrity ; her rewards may be slow in coming : they come at last, and are munificent.

Worldly prosperity is often the result of religious faith. “ Godliness has promise of the life that now is.”

It is unwise to be disheartened in the hour of adversity : the season of prosperity may soon dawn.

From gloom to gladness—from earth to heaven.

*A Book of Unusual Vivacity and Rare Vigor, on a Subject Vitally
Interesting to Every American Citizen, entitled,*

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The Foe of the Church and of the Republic.

BY REV. JOS. S. VAN DYKE, A.M.

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The position, efforts, and expressed purposes of Political Romanism in our country have awakened an interest which earnestly calls for an array of the facts bearing upon Popery's relation to Christianity and to Civil Liberty. No thoughtful observer of passing events, no lover of the pure Gospel, no friend of our free institutions can fail to discern its deadly hostility to all the American Christian holds dear. It is with this stupendous system of error, which is now laboriously endeavoring to bind upon this nation the fetters of despotism, that this work successfully does battle. Able, comprehensive, and scholarly, written in a fresh, clear, energetic, and elegant style, it meets the demand of the day. It deals with living questions, presents a fearful compendium of startling facts, and a series of arguments which must force conviction upon the mind of every unbiassed reader.

The author's long familiarity with the subject, his extensive correspondence with those in positions to ascertain the spirit of the Romish Church, and his preparation of numerous articles on the subject for the secular and religious press, are a sufficient guaranty that the subjects which occupy his pen are treated in an able and interesting manner.

Some idea of the varied character of the work may be obtained from the following brief summary of the topics discussed :

THE PAPACY PREDICTED

as a political power ; as the foe of the Church and of Republican forms of Government ; as a perpetuation of that meaningless formalism which has ever proved the deadly enemy of true Christianity ; as Paganism under a new name, baptized Heathenism ; the unwearied antagonist of the true Church and of liberty, civil and religious, personal and national.

POPERY HOSTILE TO CHRISTIANITY,

as evinced in the despotism now strenuously defended ; in the promulgation of the infallibility dogma ; in the disgusting and heaven-insulting idolatries now practised ; in the frauds unblushingly palmed upon the credulous ; in the relics recommended to the veneration of the faithful ; in the lying wonders, denominated miracles, so repeatedly and shamelessly recounted in recent publications ; and in the preposterous claim to inerrancy and immutability.

ROMANISM THE FOE OF LIBERTY,

unchanged and unchangeable, the same in spirit in this enlightened nineteenth century as in the world's midnight, Rome's noon-day of glory; opposed to civil liberty, to religious liberty, to a free press, to the education of the masses, to our Public School System, to the separation of Church and State, to freedom of conscience, to the free distribution of the Bible, to liberty of opinion and free discussion; in short, to every safeguard of popular liberty, being an emphatic protest against the civilization, progress, hopes, aims and government of the present age, and so far as circumstances will permit, the same relentless persecutor she has ever been.

These several topics, and others equally interesting, are discussed in a manly, frank, outspoken manner, and in a condensed, forcible, and popular style. Dealing little in denunciation, the positions maintained in the body of the work are irrefragably proved by quotations in foot-notes from prominent papal writers of the present day; forcing upon the mind the conviction that Popery, as it now exists, is the FOE OF GOD AND MAN, OF THE CHURCH, AND OF REPUBLICANISM.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

REV. ALEXANDER T. MCGILL, D.D., Professor in the Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, says:

"I most earnestly commend it as an effort of great merit, in the diligence and skilful array of the facts which are of such fearful moment to the Church and to the country at this hour. This book will do great good in awakening the apathy and engaging a more earnest inquiry among Protestant people respecting the insidious, busy, and baleful advances of this anti-Christian power."

REV. W. HENRY GREEN, D.D., Professor of Hebrew in the Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, says:

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